THE COMMONWEAL

A Weekly Review of Literature, The Arts and Public Affairs

Volume XIV | New York, Wednesday, October 21, 1931 | Number 25

EDITORIAL BOARD

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, Editor
GEORGE N. SHUSTER, Managing Editor
MARY KOLARS, Assistant Editor
FREDERIC THOMPSON, Assistant Editor

JOHN F. McCORMICK, Business Manager

EDITORIAL COUNCIL

CARLTON J. H. HAYES
T. LAWRASON RIGGS
RICHARD DANA SKINNER
JAMES J. WALSH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

National Credit 591
Week by Week 593
The Risk of Reflection..... 595
Saint Joan's Quincentenary...Barbara Barclay Carter 596
Returning to Reality.....George K. McCabe 599
Oriente (*verse*).....Frederic Thompson 600
A Yankee in King Ossian's Court...Bertrand K. Hart 601
Pitfalls of Criticism.....Richard Burton 603
Night-blooming Cereus.....Robert Sparks Walker 605
Futures in Antiques.....Maragaret M. Williamsen 606
The Play.....Richard Dana Skinner 608
Mystery (*verse*).....James Larkin Pearson 609
Communications 609
Books.....John A. Ryan, Grenville Vernon, Jerome G. Kerwin, Elmer Murphy, Paul Crowley, Raymond Ellsworth Larsson, Mary Kolars, Harry MacGuire, Karl F. Herzfeld 611

Previous issues of THE COMMONWEAL are indexed in the *Readers' Guide* and the *Catholic Periodical Index*.
Published weekly and copyrighted 1931, in the United States by the Calvert Publishing Corporation, Grand Central Terminal, New York, N. Y. United States: $5.00; Foreign: $6.00; Canada: $5.50. Single Copies: $.10.

NATIONAL CREDIT

THE BILLION-DOLLAR credit pool was formed in New York following President Hoover's proclamation of the plan with almost feverish haste. Within forty-eight hours of the conference in Washington, the National Credit Corporation—which is the tentative name of the undertaking—was announced. Even before this definite action, stocks had gone up in value to a point which, up to the time of writing, has encouraged many of the best judges of our financial problems to believe that the long and anxiously awaited turn in the tide of depression had at last arrived. As one of the sanest and best-balanced financial authorities said, privately, to us: "We are at last rounding Cape Horn." At any rate, even if this hope is not realized, it would seem to be almost certain that one of the most dangerous spots in the national economic system namely, the banking situation, has been treated effectively; anyhow, it has been so alleviated that a breathing space seems to be assured, during which preparations may be made to deal with fundamental things. Confidence, if not wholly restored, at least is saved from being lost in a panic, the shadow of which has lowered over the country most ominously.

What has happened seems to have been that the strong, sound banks have united, under direct encouragement and support from the national government, to save the weaker banks. This saving being accomplished, funds will soon begin to circulate through the shrunken veins of our commercial system, and that system may once more function with some degree of normality. So far as the banks which have been suffering through frozen credits are concerned, the new plan is wholly admirable. But even in the pleasing glow of the new hope, we should not forget that many banks —far too many—are suffering, and what is more important, their depositors are suffering, from reckless speculation and mismanagement on the part of their own officials.

Bank credit has more than merely a dollar basis. It rests also upon simple honesty, normal rectitude; and the public confidence in the ethical strength of the banking structure has been shaken severely. That confidence must be restored as well as the purely monetary strength of the banks. National credit in the latter sense cannot wholly be rescued by any corporation with a billion, or ten billion, dollars behind it, for national credit cannot be measured in dollars, nor can it be made, or repaired when damaged, by any corporation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which is exclusively concerned with the purely materialistic factors of the situation. According to the Hearst newspapers, quoting one of the Hearst system managers: "Our dollar is on top of the world and all the efforts of Europe to pull it down will not succeed. . . . The United States and the American dollar have inherited the world. . . ." Other newspapers, notably, the New York *Evening Post,* have struck the same exultant note. As such observers see the situation, England's desertion of the gold standard, and other significant facts, prove nothing more or less than that the financial and industrial supremacy and overlordship of the world are lodged in the hands of the United States.

The new credit corporation, and other devices, if necessary, will avert any danger of lasting disaster here, and will consolidate an American hegemony of industry and finance. And Americans are bidden to rejoice in the golden prospect. Some individuals may suffer in the present transition period, but such victims are like those sacrificed in a victorious war: to be regretted and honored, but their fate is glorious because it helps their country to succeed.

We of this paper are as sincere in our hope that the new Credit Corporation will succeed as any commercial organ possibly can be. Any step not immoral in itself that will save the nation from prolonged suffering and avert social disorder should be welcomed gladly by all save avowed revolutionaries. But we hope and trust that all our spiritual reconstructive forces, our Church bodies in particular, and chiefly our Catholic leaders—because with them, we believe, are the true words of healing—will not be turned aside from their task of rebuilding our national credit upon firmer foundations than the dollar alone by any new rush of the blind and greedy spirit of acquisitiveness, of money madness, which unchecked in the years since the war brought about the crash of 1929. Catholics anyhow must labor to bring home to all minds the teachings of Pope Pius XI that all changes of the economic system, even necessary emergency measures, are in vain when they are based on expediency and not upon ethical principles.

On the day when the billion-dollar bank corporation was being formed, one bewildered banker in New Jersey killed himself. His own bank was sound enough, but he left a note which shows that his mind and soul had been too greatly taxed by the muddle of the world to stand the strain. "Unless this world goes back to God," he wrote, "it is lost. (I know I am so tired of it all.) 'As the spirit was there, but the flesh was weak.'" If the world would heed the message, it would get more help from it than from the billion-dollar credit.

And again we voice the hope and trust that our National Council of Catholic Men, in session as we write at their annual convention, in Rochester, New York, will deal with this fundamental principle of Catholic Action firmly and practically. And we also look forward to the inspiration and leadership that will flow from the meeting of the bishops in November.

WEEK BY WEEK

THE REALLY sizable and creditable expansion of public works for the relief of unemployment which has been undertaken by the present federal government, does not seem to us to be properly publicized. This may be the effect of the administration's curious distrust of newspaper correspondents, which has been reflected, various sources inform us, in a natural dimming of the ardors of the political writers. This is unfortunate, because now if ever is needed the psychological effect of a widespread confidence that the government is not merely marking time, but is actually doing something. It comes, therefore, more or less as a surprise—and one that we might easily have missed, as the news was given little prominence and little space—to be informed by the chief of the Federal Bureau of Public Roads that emergency work on state and highway projects has increased employment in such projects by more than 150 percent in the last seven months. The $80,000,000 made available by Congress last December for this work, was in operation within five months together with $160,000,000 regular federal aid and state funds. The latest available figure shows 384,000 men to be employed, and as the chief of the bureau points out, this does not represent the total of labor stimulation, as "the road dollar spreads back through stone quarries, sand and gravel plants, cement factories, petroleum fields and refineries, mines; engages rail and water transportation facilities, and keeps the wheels of equipment and accessory factories turning." This is splendid.

Good News

DURING the past summer, depression of the most virulent kind began to affect the banks, which were forced to keep a great deal of money on hand and to loan it in accordance with the lowest discount rate in a century. Casualties among institutions unable to exist on this lean fare became stupendous, and of course the resultant damage to public confidence baffled estimate. One financier after another proposed a relief plan similar in outline to that which President Hoover last week maneuvered into being. A central credit corporation worth $1,000,000,000 (subscribed by various big banks) is now in a position to liquidate paper which the Federal Reserve system itself is not empowered to handle. It is a good move, which must be construed as desperately needed prevention rather than any type of cure. The $1,000,000,000 is to important parts of the banking enterprise what a dose of adrenalin would be to an exhausted sufferer. We should not be surprised, however, if the raise of the discount rate by a full percent should prove to be more important than the Hoover credit pool. This raise gives the banks a chance to earn more, and should therefore increase their assets and fortify public confidence. Nevertheless such a step at this time is

Respite on the Rialto

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an extremely debatable action, the outcome of which can only be awaited with what hope one still preserves.

Senator Morrow

THAT deep-rooted instinct for knowing when a worthy man has gone manifested itself clearly when the news of Senator Dwight W. Morrow's sudden death was relayed to the nation. Transferred from business management to public affairs only a few years ago, he has demonstrated an unerring factualness, a splendid tact and a genuinely notable integrity. Smoothing out trouble in Mexico was his first, and possibly most important, service. But his outspoken declaration on the prohibition question and his services during the London conferences were no doubt more widely appreciated, especially since the name and fame of Colonel Lindbergh had made him a "spectacular" figure. It is too bad that a man who was obviously cut out to be a President—by representative manliness no less than personal ability—was so abruptly lost to his country. Nevertheless, the qualities his life manifested have become a lasting source of encouragement. Among the numerous tributes paid to his memory, none more fittingly supplements what we could say here than the words of Archbishop Ruiz y Flores: "It is a great loss for the United States and for his many friends, among whom I had the honor of being. The Church in Mexico has had reason to remember Mr. Morrow from the time of his arrival as ambassador here. By his friendly offices he took a real interest in paving the road to reach some settlement of the religious conflict. As an American he knew what religious freedom means. I consider that he was a man of broadest mind, generous, wise, a real American of his time. I remember the day he took leave of Archbishop Diaz and myself. He said to us, 'Had I to deal longer with you, I would have become a Catholic.' May God grant to Mr. Morrow everlasting peace!"

Wherein Is Wealth?

THE EXTENT to which financial operations have lost touch with real wealth, or consumable commodities enjoyable by persons living here and now, is something that is very little understood and will probably not be fully realized until it is a matter of history and of investigations after the fact. We have nevertheless various intimations of it, from the reports of widespread frozen assets which are little more in the present situation than ledger figures and engraved paper, to the growth of bartering in small communities, and renewed reports of bartering enterprises on a large international scale. The extent to which bankruptcies and the cancelation of debts affect a rough working adjustment of the credit situation, so that frozen credits release their paralyzing action on the here-and-now exchange of real wealth, is something which we have not seen comprehensively analyzed, and is a field for investigation which should be recommended to competent experts. Among the latest instances of large-scale international bartering, we have Brazilian Minister of Finance José Maria Whittaker's proposals for the exchange of Brazilian coffee for surplus United States wheat.

IN A LETTER to leading coffee-growers he sees several advantages in such an operation: an opportunity for the Brazilian government to continue buying up coffee stocks, avoidance of making remittances in an unsettled money market of more than $12,000,000, relief to Brazil from the expense of storing 1,275,000 bags of coffee, and an addition to shipping business valued at more than a million dollars. On completion of this barter, it is said that a deal will be initiated for the exchange of coffee for 1,000,000 tons of coal from the German Ruhr district. At the same time, the Chilean Minister of Commerce is reported to have begun negotiations with Russia for the barter of Soviet oil for Chilean nitrates. Elimination of the monetary middle-man in these operations, though it may seem to be a saving, actually involves a real loss in time and trouble. Money and credits still are and will be the oil of commerce, without which the machinery of exchange creaks laboriously and cannot get very far. There has been something in the nature of a corner on the supply of oil, and the problem would seem to be, for the holders as well as for everyone else, how to get it back into use.

The Cloud Clipper

IN FORTY-FIVE seconds America's latest leviathan of the sky lifted twelve tons of gross load from the waters of Long Island Sound into the air. The plane, the largest to be developed in America, will have accommodations for forty-eight passengers besides its crew. Recalling the days when the United States' tall sailing ships were the queens of the sea, the new flying boat has been named the American Clipper. The naming took place at the final session of the Pan-American Commercial Conference in Washington, after which the plane was flown south to be the flagship of the flourishing and extensive airplane service between the United States, the Caribbean Islands, and Central and South America. News of this was given little space in our newspapers, that recently featured all over the front pages the remarkable flight of American airmen, first to span, without stopping, the 4,500 miles over the Pacific Ocean from Japan to California. Daring and spectacular as this flight was, a feat which definitely marks a point in history, we wonder whether it is truly as important as the advent and success of the flying American Clipper. Commercial aviation in the United States leads all other countries in the world far and away in the number of its planes and in the number of the passengers flown. This it has accomplished without subsidy, and while American commercial ships have lost their former preëminence on the seas, in the air America's fleets are constantly and splendidly increasing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Hope of America

OPTIMISTIC statements on the business conditions have been suffering rather severe deflations recently, in most cases for the simple reason that they were not backed up with the gold of truth. This in turn, no doubt, has had a bearish effect on legitimately secured optimism. In spite of this, we cannot resist rediscounting what appealed to us as a thoroughly sound statement issued recently by the Chicago Association of Stock Exchange Firms. It will stand close scrutiny, and is pleasantly bullish, we believe, without intending any coarse pun on the word, bull. Said the association: "In terms of real wealth, America is richer today than ever before. Our natural resources are unimpaired by depression. Our wealth in the form of buildings, machinery and equipment of all kinds increases year after year. The progress of America as a going concern depends upon the spirit of Americans. With the solid facts of wealth evident on all sides, the exercise of reason always results in faith in America. Confidence in a land like ours is common sense. Prosperity springs from confidence." True, we agree, and we hopefully await that leadership from our elected and our business leaders, though it seems at long last, which will lead the numerous shorn lambs of our unemployed back once more into the green fields of productive and remunerative employment in this land of plenty.

Hurting the Business

"A RESPONSIBLE newspaper man of a Western community" is quoted by *Editor and Publisher* to the effect that some journals in his region are "playing down automobile accidents at the request of automobile advertisers who say that the publication of harrowing stories about road accidents hurts business." To which it makes the following editorial comment: "With what pride an 'editor' must hold up the last edition of his rag while exclaiming to his admiring staff, 'Well, boys, ten dead and forty hurt in this paper today, and all shoved back so far that Glitz must double his space.' " Of course responsible automobile manufacturers must be worried by the ghastly toll of lives exacted every season, but we had hoped that the day when they could quash the facts—with journalistic connivance—was over. Certainly the new market for cars is not the same as the boom demand of some years ago. Families which might now buy are those which would if driving in city and suburban traffic were not so hazardous, and if the "plumb fool" motorist weren't still hogging the road and taking chances. Some car and tire firms have already begun to make war on the prevailing chaos. We are convinced that others will have to join in. Look at the murderous record of last year: 33,000 people killed, over 900,000 injured. A rough million victims in 1930! Extend that record over a decade, and there will be enough citizens to turn this country into a semblance of Bermuda. Playing down automobile accidents, indeed!

We Agree

WE RECENTLY spoke in these columns of the sort of perverse complacency which is apt to animate certain minds in times of serious distress like this. Our chalking up this deplorable phenomenon to the credit of the depression, however, does not prevent our inclining also to the Abbé Dimnet's prediction that the same depression will bring forth far better things. The abbé arriving the other day for his yearly visit to our shores, was asked by ship's reporters (of course!) what he thought of the hard times. It appears that the distinguished Frenchman still thinks of them what he thought upon embarking for his native country a year ago: that they will discipline wholesomely a world indolent from too much prosperity, clear its thinking and bring out its real stuff. "When the hardships are over," he remarked, "you will see that finer minds and a finer attitude will be the result. The present situation will bring about more honest thinking." This is the right note of sober hope, surely, and it will not pay us to lose it, whatever actualities we have to face in the shape of the acute suffering of the innocent, or the morbid satisfaction of calamity-howlers. Resourcefulness and sportsmanship, not to speak of the fortitude and spiritual valor which have direct commerce with grace, are part of the heroic tradition of our race. It is a blameless pleasure to remember this: it may also be a solemn duty.

Columbia's Dante Lecturer

MORE than ordinary interest attaches to the announcement of President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University that the Marquis Piero Misciattelli, of the University of Siena, will lecture at the Casa Italiana this fall. Four lectures on Dante are planned, and a fifth, on primitive Sienese painters, will be delivered in English on Monday evening, December 7, under the auspices of the Institute of Arts and Sciences of the university. The lecturer is distinguished in the field of mysticism no less than that of art and literature. He is the first to hold the chair of literature on Saint Catherine of Siena, founded in 1927 at his own university, and has edited the saint's letters in six intensive volumes, the letters of Giovanni Colombini, and authoritative anthologies on meditations and prayers. His secular studies, outside of his own peculiar Dantean field, have been interestingly diverse, ranging from interpretations of mediaeval and Renaissance periods and figures to recognized work on Shakespeare and Goethe. He is co-editor of *Marianna,* a magazine of art and letters published in Rome, and founder of *La Diana,* an artistic and historical review. There is an incidental interest in the fact that a scholar of this background, and who is, besides, the scion of Siena's oldest nobility, should be a convinced Fascist. Columbia is to be congratulated on securing so true a representative of the Catholic culture of Europe, even for this brief term. The Casa Italiana's promising work should gain definitely by these lectures.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE FEATURE story, heaven knows, is not new, and it would be a belated gesture to express surprise now at the material, trivial, fantastic and for the most part cheap, with which the daily press has long been in the habit of padding its columns of legitimate information. However, a recent specimen of the process has been so dramatically complete, in the excruciating unimportance of its matter and the fatiguing expansiveness of its manner, that it justifies citation. A Columbia professor said that only morons whistle. The story was printed far and wide, with the very considerable margin of psychoanalytical embroidery that the savant was alleged to have provided with it. Then, as if that were not afflicting enough, the matter was followed up. Exactly as if something that meant anything to anybody had been said, telegrams and cables hummed about the world, eliciting finally the fact that many of the great whistle, or have whistled: Mussolini's name adorned the new stories, as did that of Senator Borah (who, incidentally, was good for a separate interview); President Roosevelt, John D. Rockefeller, jr., Thomas Edison—these merely topped the very considerable list compiled, at the expense of money, time and elbow grease, in refutation. The last chapter (to date) was written when the professor explained that his statement had been set down in the lightest sort of malice against two whistling colleagues, etc., etc. If our paper-fed general public really suffers from a lack of proportion and an inadequate sense of reality, surely the piling up of this kind of thing is partly to blame.

All about Nothing

THE RISK OF REFLECTION

THESE are odd times in which we live. Surely no end of parents and educators, confronting the long file of candidates for the glory and happiness of tomorrow, must be asking themselves: Into what kind of world are these youngsters going; and how can we help prepare them for it? Such queries have their part of pathos, of love, of exasperation, of responsibility, of unconscious arrogance. Certainly those of us who are older understand perfectly that youth is not plastic in our hands—that it will work out its own destiny a little to please us and a little in our despite. One could write a good play about "what every youngster knows." The boys and girls in it would see right through their forebears as Barrie's women look through their husbands. After all, history is explicit on the matter. Every generation is equipped with a certain amount of dynamite. The playwrights of the Elizabethan age, or the poets of Shelley's time, had upset the staid literary households of their fathers before they were thirty. Napoleon was hardly a middle-aged man when he went to Elba; and one has a fancy that modern Europe is gradually being rebuilt by striplings and maidens who have decided to act while their elders do the talking. Yes, the youth problem is nothing like the sculptor's—it is not a case of clay to be molded or marble to be dressed. It is, rather, the problem of the creative act. It is the question of what the next race of men will make of man.

But we need to remember, first of all, that a creative act is not a stunt or a fit of insanity. The word "original" is misleading. The most original person in the United States lives, no doubt, in a certain Mid-Western hospital for the insane. He speaks a language every word of which is his own invention; and one supposes that, however rich his speech may be in rhythm and color of the James Joyce variety, it is somewhat lacking as a conversational medium. Legitimately defined, the creative act is that by which the individual puts himself correctly into the collective setting. Such a definition is the essence of all that can be said regarding youth.

And if we agree that the problem of youth is the problem of creative activity, we mean that out of youth itself there must emerge, individually and collectively, that which man needs to change and control new conditions. All we of the older generation can do is provide such equipment as we can to help the youngsters think, decide and act more adequately. We offer our own experience, which naturally divides itself into two parts: first, the experience we have acquired of the past life of humanity as a whole, which experience is usually termed "tradition" and is acquired by study and reflection; second, the consciousness we have of the manner in which our own problems and aspirations have been faced—a consciousness we may call our collective individuality. Now it is the purpose of the educational system to give instruction in the technique of acquiring the first. But possibly the generation to which we who write have belonged may have something to say regarding the second.

What were we who saw the light of day in the 80's and 90's interested in doing? What have we actually done? And what is our attitude toward our achievement? Well, we have to a certain extent been a frustrated generation. The war and its aftermath cut a clean swathe through the field in which we worked; and as a result many of us have been unable to piece both parts together again—unable to see the thing as a whole or to reconstruct the main lines of our activity. I doubt if ever a younger generation in America was more restless, eager, impassioned and generous than ours. Most of us came from a now old-fashioned world, with a plain rural tang. There were still large homesteading areas available then, and when we thought as children of migrating it was to them and not to the cities. No automobiles chugged outside our nursery windows: we were capable of riding behind a horse with our parents to hear Bryan orate twenty miles away. And so when we came to the cities and found them growing and grinding, with a new immigrant population in the tread-mill, we were appalled. The social wrong done to a humanity thus congregated round factories, stock-yards and warehouses hurt our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consciences almost physically. The ugliness of the 1900's filled us with indescribable loathing. Therefore our literature was a literature of protest: a poetry renaissance, with Amy Lowell and Vachel Lindsay at both poles, in which there was a hunger for beauty and a bit of revolution; a fiction which was part protest and part brutal naturalism—the novels of Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis; and a point of view the primitive honesty of which has hardly been preserved in the eventual popular substitutes of debunking and psychoanalysis. The college atmosphere of those days was raw and crude enough; but at least we did not go to college merely to associate with the nicest people and to applaud the nicest teams.

Most of that energy went up in smoke during the war era. And when those of us returned who did return, the spiritual life of America was still superficially the same. Some of the old leaders had been silenced, it is true, but the others were talking on much as ever. Yes, it did not look as if things had greatly changed. Only gradually did one grow conscious of the fact that the whole structure of life had shifted at the bottom, and that we had quite imperceptibly moved into a different climate, another altitude. When one finally realized the thing, it unmasked itself as a new attitude toward thinking. Not that the world took logic less seriously than we. The difference was, rather, that whereas we had been dynamic, the world was now static. A young man of those days might have shocked his elders by saying agnostically, "I don't believe there is a God, because—" and then would have followed the usual items of evil, evolution and moral cowardice among the churchly. The new civilization, however, was one in which we assumed that though there might be a God, He was not important enough to bar flippant and ever so witty comment. Quite probably the brilliant agnostics of 1905 would have walked miles to hear Saint Paul, had he come to life again. But the decade to which we have just degenerated would have sent a smart reporter and a curious drove of automobiles. And government? It is difficult to reconstruct now the contours of civic debating in the days when Roosevelt, Beveridge, Wilson and LaFollette staged their epic battles. A good deal of what was said may have been buncombe, but it did at least rouse us, make us think, protest, agree, get angry. But in the Harding-Coolidge era, such a thing as a deeper political issue was bad form. Prohibition? Yes. But the point was not whether dry laws were incompatible with American governmental principle, or compatible with American social philosophy. The point was rather how to keep enough speakeasies open—and enough speakeasies closed.

When we say that our generation sold out—and sold out at a definite price—we are making just the most obvious kind of a confession. Of course we have kept some of our old front—but we did not keep the faith. What the men who survived the war were really interested in was somebody who would tell them how to make money and how to spend it. But—and this is more grave—we never really admitted our state of mind. We claimed to have our hobbies. We said we were obsessed with sex—and we weren't. There have been one or two moments in American history when sex—as a view of life—was important, but none of these moments is recent. What our generation meant by "sex" was girls to spend money on, and men to do the spending. We said we were clever and smart—which we were not. American wit, which once captivated even France, has never been at a lower ebb than during the past dozen years. We said we had unearthed the pallor of Main Street and the folly of Babbitt—and we had not unearthed them. Of course we saw that Main Street was as dead as a leg of mutton, which was after all a pretty obvious fact. But we did not stop to find out why Main Street was dead, or even to wonder why, until in the year of the Lord 1930 it was evident that the collapse of agriculture had cut the economic soil from under our feet. And yes, we did laugh at Babbitt, who was nothing more serious than a repatriated buck-private trying to dress like the captain. But we did not stop to ask whom Babbitt was imitating, or why Babbitt had thus taken to mimicry.

We failed in all these things for several reasons. Perhaps because the creative activity for which we had been destined was suddenly shunted into a crusade for democracy which in turn was changed into a crusade for plutocracy. We failed because we ceased to think. Today we have no other function than to admit our failure, our utter moral and spiritual bankruptcy. We can still reach out our hands to the younger generation and say: "You can afford to give the best that is in you, you can afford to think, you can love righteousness and fear the Lord." A passage in Boswell tells of Dr. Johnson's arrival at the Boer's Head one evening, with the declaration: "I have just heard some good stories, sirs. But I shall not tell them to you. You would not understand them." And this attitude, with the wistfulness, tragedy and defensive arrogance that blend in it, seems to us characteristic of the thoughtful men of our generation. We have nothing more to say to our own time. It did not understand, it would not understand, it could not understand. For it had slain within its bosom the principle of creation.

Can youth afford to think? It would be futile to deny the risks. But let the youngsters make up their minds to see through us—clean through us. Let them learn that the tasks to which we dedicated our grossness lie about us in splinters, and that the riches to which we offered incense have left us now to stand like shivering reeds on the brink of the Absolute Inconsequential. And if they manage all this they may understand that for them hope and safety lie in opening wide again the full heart of man—opening it to the beautiful and to the useful service; to the law which has been written in the sacred core of every relatively enduring civilization; and, above all, to God, Whom had we served we should not now be standing naked and alone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SAINT JOAN'S QUINCENTENARY

By BARBARA BARCLAY CARTER

Though English literature has long since repaid Saint Joan with honor for the vituperations once heaped upon her, it is a new idea which St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance—an organization of English Catholic women—is sponsoring. The alliance hopes to contribute handsomely to the chapel which is to be erected in honor of Saint Joan at Rouen near the scene of her martyrdom. Nor is this by any means the sole task in which these British women are engaged. Miss Carter's paper is a suggestive and challenging summary of the varied activities of the organization.—The Editors.

THIS year in Rouen, on May 30, in celebration of the quincentenary of the death of Saint Joan of Arc, a great procession, led by the cardinal legate, Cardinal Bourne of Westminster, and four other cardinals in scarlet robes and trains, and by seventy-eight bishops in lace and purple, set forth from the spot where she died, in the Old Market Place, to cast flowers in the Seine that had received her ashes and her unconsumed heart. And all along the route, the enthusiasm of the Rouen people was stirred by the sight of a delegation, mainly composed of women, who marched behind the Union Jack bearing a banner and pennons of blue, white and gold—Saint Joan's colors. On one side of the banner was Saint Joan on her black charger, with her watchwords, "Jesus-Maria," and on the other side, the inscription, "Homage to Saint Joan of Arc from England."

This delegation had been organized by the St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, which, with other nationally organized societies of Catholic women, has been promoting an appeal to England to make amende honorable for her share in Saint Joan's death by contributing to the chapel Rouen would build near the place of her martyrdom. This appeal found a response from men and women of every creed and every opinion. The names of over a thousand subscribers are contained in the "Golden Book," given by the English delegation to the Archbishop of Rouen to be laid on the foundation stone and afterwards kept in perpetuity in the new chapel.

Four of the societies of Catholic women represented on the Quincentenary Committee occupy themselves almost entirely with social service. This is a vast field, for of the 2,000,000 Catholics scattered over England the majority are of the very poor; and while converts are entering the Church at the rate of over twelve thousand a year, leakage, often the result of isolation in non-Catholic surroundings, has assumed disquieting proportions. The Ladies of Charity, in England as elsewhere, visit the sick and poor, instruct converts, serve on school Care Committees, urge the lapsed to return to the Faith, and wherever possible work in cooperation with the Sisters of Charity. The Children of Mary hold monthly meetings which provide the opportunities of a girl's club, enabling those working away from home to make Catholic friends. The Dames of St. Joan, recently founded as a feminine counterpart to the Knights of Columbus, have begun by opening a hostel and a bureau where women in difficulties can seek advice and aid. The Catholic Women's League exercises useful action in a wide and varied field of social works. And it was led to widen its sphere of activity by the realization that evil could best be combated, and suffering relieved, when buttressed by the law of the land and that for this women were needed in civil life. This realization twenty-one years ago led to the foundation of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, now St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance.

"A Catholic woman suffragist," wrote Alice Meynell in the early days of the society, "is a suffragist on graver ground and with weightier reasons than any other suffragist in England." And thus the St. Joan's Alliance, composed like the others of Catholics only, has sought from its inception the vindication of the political and economic personality of woman, the "furtherance of the usefulness of Catholic women as citizens," and the accomplishment of such "political acts of mercy" as may be achieved by legislative reforms. The alliance numbers many distinguished priests among its associates. One may mention Monsignor Brown, Bishop of Pella, Father C. C. Martindale, S.J., Father Bede Jarrett, O.P., Dominican provincial for England, Dom Gilbert Higgins, C.R.L., the late Monsignor Giesswein of Hungary, and Dom Luigi Sturzo of Italy.

When it was founded, the suffrage agitation was at its height. So swiftly have matters progressed that it is hard for the present generation to realize at all the atmosphere of civil war of those early years; when to innumerable women the consciousness of intellectual powers doomed to sterility by an artificial code, of enforced helplessness before vast evils crying out for reform, made the suffrage movement appear a crusade; when, on the one hand, desperation led to violence, and on the other, irrational subhuman fear expressed itself in brutalities more credible of war than peace. All that today seems of the distant past. In 1918 St. Joan's Alliance, with the other suffrage societies, could claim a partial victory, when the vote was granted to women over thirty. The next year one of its members, Miss Annie Christitch, had the joy of obtaining from His Holiness Pope Benedict XV the opinion, "We would wish to see women electors everywhere." Thereafter, in the final campaign for suffrage on equal terms with men, it took an especially prominent part. When in 1928 the Conservative Prime Minister agreed to allow the introduction of a bill lowering the voting age for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

women to twenty-one, it was widely stated that this was in a measure the result of the impression produced on him by the brilliant young Catholic orator, Miss Nancy Stewart Parnell, who represented the alliance on a joint deputation, and who in consequence was proclaimed by more than one newspaper as "the girl who changed the law of England."

Meanwhile, those "graver grounds and weightier reasons" which had made the vote seem to the pioneer Catholic suffragists an instrument particularly necessary and precious, have become more widely apparent. The entry of women into public life has brought a greater vigilance in the matter of morals, a more delicate appraisal of justice and injustice, especially, but not exclusively, where women and the family are concerned. In the main, Catholic women may well feel that the cause of all women is their cause. In 1918 mothers had no rights over their children if these were born in lawful wedlock; no subsequent marriage of the parents could remove the slur of illegitimacy from a child; girls could be married at the age of twelve. The Guardianship of Infants Act, the Legitimacy Act (which brought the law of England into harmony with canon law as established 600 years ago), the act raising the age of marriage to sixteen for both boys and girls, and, one may add, the far more stringent measures to protect children from assault, and the Widows' Pensions Act, have been the work of the enfranchised women. These "political acts of mercy" all Catholic women have been glad to support, and the St. Joan's Alliance has helped to promote them by deputations, public meetings, demonstrations, questionnaires to parliamentary and local government candidates, resolutions forwarded to appropriate quarters, letters and articles in the press (particularly the Catholic press), publications in its own monthly organ, the *Catholic Citizen,* and systematic lobbying of members of Parliament. Again, the terrible rate of maternal mortality in England, due to a lack of adequate maternity services, is the subject of yearly protests to the ministry of health.

Another question uniting all women, and which it has been the women's part to bring to the fore, is the support of all effectual measures against the white slave traffic. The St. Joan's Alliance is affiliated to the International Abolitionist Federation in the fight against the state regulation of vice, which, abolished in Great Britain through the devoted work of Josephine Butler in the last century, still persists on the fringes of the empire. The alliance is also affiliated to the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, which presses for the abolition of the last vestiges of legal sanction for a double moral standard for men and women. Such vestiges persist in the present Solicitation Laws, which, designed against women only, allow them to be arrested and convicted on police evidence alone, and have lately resulted in such public and glaring miscarriages of justice that the agitation for their reform may look for speedy success. In this connection, the alliance has always pressed for a more general use of suitable policewomen, as able to exercise a more equable and effectual vigilance.

Yet another subject of repeated protests, on the part of the St. Joan's Alliance and of the Women's Advisory Council of the League of Nations Union (on which it is represented), has been the fact that in Hongkong, under the form of *Mui Tsai,* or simulated adoption, girl-children are still sold into the most degrading form of slavery—protests which have at last resulted in government action. A new resolution passed at the last general meeting of St. Joan's, which is taking a definite lead in the matter, "calls upon the government to take all possible steps to discountenance among indigenous peoples any practices whatever involving the bartering of women and children into domestic or other forms of slavery."

To many, Saint Joan of Arc seems the patron and ideal of modern woman, and to none more than to the alliance that bears her name. Her answer to her judges, "Are there not plenty of women for these?" in reply to the question why she was not content to spin and sew and occupy herself with womanly doings, anticipates by five centuries the modern woman's plea for the right to follow the calling to which her gifts and capacities summon her. The St. Joan's Alliance is a definitely feminist society, seeking to break down all the barriers still opposed to the activities of woman, and working for "equal pay and equal opportunities" in every field.

As regards industrial work, it takes its stand with those who regard protective legislation applying to women alone as detrimental to woman's industrial status—a controversial point, on which there is great diversity of opinion. It also demands the right of married women to retain their nationality if they so choose—a right they held till 1870, and the denial of which has led to some painful anomalies. During the war English-born wives or widows of Germans, even if they had never left England, became "enemy aliens," to be interned or deported, while an Englishwoman marrying an American loses her own nationality without acquiring that of her husband, so that she has no passport and her official status is "nationality—none." Another subject of united protest on the part of all the feminist societies is the fact that women employed under local authorities are immediately dismissed on marriage —a system particularly untenable in the case of the woman teacher, where the experience of married women would undoubtedly serve the cause of education, and many women with the true teacher's vocation have to abandon their work in mid-career.

At the same time, the St. Joan's Alliance is equally vigilant where strictly Catholic interests are concerned. While demanding for women the right to judicial separation allowed them by canon law, but till recently denied them by that of England, it has protested against increased facilities for divorce. The questionnaires repeatedly submitted to parliamentary candi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dates and the resolutions forwarded yearly to the ministries concerned, include the demand for "fair and adequate financial treatment of Catholic elementary and secondary schools," and for a pledge that no "information on artificial birth control be given at centers maintained out of public funds." The firm protest and immediate resignation of the representatives of St. Joan's Alliance from the National Council of Women, when that body passed a majority resolution in favor of birth control, caused considerable impression both in England and abroad, and was the subject of a special article in the *Osservatore Romano*. While on the other hand, the early and loyal collaboration of the alliance with other feminist societies, especially in the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, has been rewarded by an unvarying respect for its Catholic principles; nor is it to be reckoned one of the least of its achievements and raisons d'être that it has thus caused Catholic ideals to be appreciated in circles that might otherwise have been alien or even hostile.

One may add that during the war the St. Joan's Alliance had a monthly Mass said for peace and for the souls of all the fallen; that in 1920, it held a meeting calling upon the government to proclaim a "Truce of God" in Ireland without delay; and that its banner and colors have figured in all non-party demonstrations in favor of disarmament and world-peace. It has members in almost every country. Besides Masses for its dead, and a yearly Mass for its members on Saint Joan's feast, it has a Mass said at every general election, "to invoke Divine guidance on all the men and women electors." Its victories in the cause of the enfranchisement of women have been celebrated likewise by Masses of thanksgiving, and the tribute of a wreath of laurel, bound with the blue, white and gold of the alliance laid by Saint Joan's shrine in Westminster Cathedral. And to its members it has seemed almost more than a coincidence that when in 1929 women and men for the first time went to the polls on equal terms, they did so on the feast of Saint Joan.

RETURNING TO REALITY[1]

By GEORGE K. McCABE

IF WE could think or talk our way out of the business depression, we should long ago have been able to speak of it as the "late unpleasantness." Instead, we find ourselves still mired in the slough of despond because some of our industrial and commercial leaders are unwilling or unable to face the ugly fact that the price level must fall to the pre-war figures, before the normal volume of buying can or will be resumed.

Why bid the consumer banish fear and hesitancy when he knows full well that the prices of his purchases will ultimately decline in the same proportion as the prices of his products? Customer resistance and timidity have all but disappeared in those lines where the downward adjustment of prices has been completed. The Federal Reserve Board reports larger sales in terms of gallons, yards and tons in textiles, automobile tires, leather, sugar, cocoa, coffee, copper and oil. To be sure, the margins of profit are almost invisible because costs have not as yet been cut to the same extent as prices, but the restoration of volume means that the travail of depression is almost ended for these industries. At the time during which these price adjustments were being made, leaders in other, undeflated fields have talked glibly of a rise in the price level as the open sesame to prosperity. Some of the more glaring discrepancies in wholesale prices occur in those lines which are operating at 50 percent of capacity: steel, building, automobiles and railways.

That these price differences are difficult to even off, no one would deny. For example, we cannot expect the price of shoes to decline by 35 percent because the bottom has dropped out of the market for hides. Even leather, though more closely allied to hides in cost of production, has not yet been greatly affected in price by the oversupply of the raw material. However, the current announcement to the effect that shoe prices are to be reduced this fall by only a few cents per pair is disappointing. It is quite unlikely that footwear will continue to sell close to 1926 prices while a general decline of 20 to 30 percent is under way. Refusals to adjust prices and premature announcements of advances in quotations seem to the present writer to be based on four misconceptions.

In the first place, the decline from the 1926 level, stated as 100 percent, to the pre-war figure, 70 percent, will not be short-lived. The recession following the Civil War was not materially reversed until 1900. Again, the quotation on one commodity cannot be maintained by restricted production because there is so wide a range of substitutes. The demand for any article can now be said to be elastic. Even the sales of public utility services clearly demonstrate this elementary theorem of economics. A cut-rate trip to Europe competes directly with a prospective new car. Unadjusted rentals occasion removals to cheaper quarters and a deflection of the released purchasing power to a refurbishment of the family wardrobe at low cost.

The third point in the deflation lesson is this: prices usually have to be reduced before an equivalent cut in cost of production is practicable. There are many busi-

[1] The views expressed in this paper are those of a trained and open-minded economist, but they are not published because THE COMMONWEAL agrees with them. Something on the same subject from a different standpoint will follow.—The Editors.

LIBRARY
ST. CHARLES SEMINARY
CARTHAGENA, OHIO
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness expenses, such as taxes, rent, interest and salaries, which are so fixed as to be very slow of adjustment. If those in command of industry were to refuse to make any price concessions until local taxes were reduced, the depression would last for many years. As more and more taxpayers find themselves unable to pay, as have one-third in Chicago, municipal ambition will perforce be curbed and deficit bond issues employed to effect the adjustment of tax rates and assessments to something like equality with other changes in the cost of production. Similarily, the stubborn landlord will shortly weary of his attempt to meet past-due interest payments with judgments against evicted tenants. Even wage and salary earners are beginning to see that their interests would be served by the retention at reduced rates of the full staff. Pre-depression wages can be paid in many instances only by drastic pruning of the force to bring the productivity of the few retained up to their compensation.

Finally, it may be said that easy money, lower rediscount rates at the Federal Reserve Banks, rising savings deposits, and postponement of reparations payments will not themselves clear the road to recovery, because they are not substitutes for properly adjusted prices.

That these commonplaces of economic arithmetic are entering into the executive thinking of our business leaders is demonstrated by fresh evidence almost every day. Although the rail chiefs are requesting a general increase in rates, they are at the same time cutting the ground from under their competitors by 20 to 60 percent rate concessions in cotton, live stock and short freight hauls generally. Services rendered at the old rates have in many cases been expedited, or added to by free delivery or the absorption of switching or other terminal charges. In the Southern states what amounts to a 20 to 30 percent saving to the patron has been effected without changing the published fare for regular one-way trips. Then again, it is persistently rumored about that the published quotations for building materials are subject to considerable qualification, and that wage rates in this sheltered industry are not being maintained.

In the retail field the process of adjustment proceeds apace. Most department stores, chain stores in the grocery and drug business, restaurant companies and low-priced clothing stores are doing as large a volume of business, in terms of the number of units sold, as they did last year. Low inventories, the ability to pass the pressure of price reduction on to their employees, supply houses, advertising mediums, and the absence of burdensome fixed interest payments on funded debt have enabled them to make this adjustment with a resultant decline in net income of not more than 30 percent. And surely, the stockholders prefer two-thirds of the dividend loaf to an assessment. Furthermore, these concerns have protected their profit margin fairly well by capturing sales from their less alert competitors. This victory has enabled the large firms to distribute the burden of their more or less fixed overhead expenses over more dollars of gross income than would have been the case had they stood out against price cutting.

If all industries were as close to price stability as textiles and oils, the general volume of business would be about the same as last year instead of 15 percent lower.

Of course, this process of rationalizing cost to restore net income after seemingly ruinous price concessions may involve receivership and the drastic writing down of capital values. But if we compare this situation with a necessary and serious operation on the body, the sooner the knife is applied the sooner may the patient be restored to health. That there are several thousand business failures per month is merely an indication that this painful but necessary treatment is well under way. Innumerable concerns have found this the only way of extricating themselves from previous depressions; others have put off the operation only to linger on in poor financial health to the injury of everyone concerned.

Oriente

The day goes out on the lagoon
And the moon palely floats
Low in the blue grey sky.

On the grey water a small boat,
Its wings spread to the expiring breeze
Of evening, rests lightly.

The water slick and dull-bright as molten lead
Is touched in spots by cat's paws,
Like breath on a mirror in a room half dark.

A paraqueet screams in the mangrove swamp.

The plumes of twin tall palms
Barely disturb with motion
Their etched outlines against the sky.

The world sweeps into blue
And one by one the stars
Blink like the lights of distant
Lighthouses charting depths.

In the cockpit of the boat,
Propped between tiller and coaming,
A young man reads Aristotle
And thought meets thought
Across two thousand years.

The light failing, the book is laid aside,
The anchor's cast, and night
Creeps from the dark shore
Over the open water.

The boat is black between
Two indigo firmaments star-dusted,
Silent except for the occasional tinkling
Of a pan or cup in the cabin,
And from the portholes and hatch
Stream yellow beams.

FREDERIC THOMPSON.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A YANKEE IN KING OSSIAN'S COURT

By BERTRAND K. HART

WHEN one becomes a spiritual Dubliner (which no Unitarian Yankee ought properly to do), one ponders a little on the most prudent manner of talking about it.

Nobody wants to listen to travelers' tales: it needs ingenuity to hold your prey. Fretted thought has advised me to engage the accent and idiom of the big-game hunter, before whose lethal armory all things fall save the personal pronoun. I have salvaged that! . . . So, then, I have traveled in Ireland, far and widely in that pleasant land, and I have a confused ambition to talk about it.

Two unrelated pictures come back to me impudently before I begin at all. The first is of a tall gentleman with walrus mustaches who is adjusting his dinner jacket and assuring his New England hostess that he will be glad to linger for a moment and quarrel with the visiting author. It was, and still is, his peculiar office to draw out the exhibited geniuses at literary teas and poets' evenings. If you get them mad, you know —it helps so! Hostesses love the walrus.

"I'll start a row with your lion," he said, "and then I'll escape."

"You tell me that!' retorted the hostess, musingly. "Dear man, the lion is Irish!"

The other picture is from a different city, and in a different time, but still in New England. Padraic Colum is sitting on the floor with James Joyce's bulky volume in his lap, reading aloud with incomparable joy the more vendible incidents of the life of Stephen Daedelus. We are also on the floor, because we are many and the exiled Dubliner who has herded us together is too absent-minded to buy chairs for his house. Padraic, who is not much larger than the book but far more beautiful, is fairly rocking with joy, back and forth like a neat little teetotum; and in a voice grained and mellowed by the music of the Irish South he is bringing before us, in all its tang and mettle and rowdy magnificence, that finest city of them all. . . . Here is Dublin.

Those were pictures taken long ago. Since that early day Padraic has stayed in my house more than once. I have had my lapel buttonhole held by the unequaled James Stephens. (I think I shall have that buttonhole framed.) I have sat with William Butler Yeats, in his fine blue room high over Fitzwilliams Square. I have walked and talked and dined and gamboled and strolled and argued with Jack Yeats and AE, with Lennox Robinson and Patrick Campbell, and how many more! I have followed Gogarty across the Liffey and into Connemara, taken tea with Winifred Letts, clicked glasses with O'Flaherty, roared with the rest in the pit at the Abbey while Sean O'Casey, with his hat on his head in the box, sat snapping at Lady Gregory. Hunted on Lord Dunsany's acres. . . . Climbed all the eastern mountains with officers of the Revolutionary army, who learned the sheep tracks while fleeing for their lives. . . . I have taken my Guinness daily for weeks on end in the corner across from exquisite St. Stephen's Green, which most Irishmen and all Dubliners know to be the threshold of heaven. I have dined with the Louis Smiths, and the Kingsmill-Moores, worn out the gay evenings many a time and oft in the flower-filled drawing-rooms of the Macnie, applauded in the Dail, cheered the hurley men in the Curragh Field, and talked away uncounted nights in the United Arts Club listening to tales that ranged from Lord Plunkett's agrarian benefices to the reasons why fairy forts are bad places for cows. Ernest Walsh said to me one night—well, never mind; I forget what. And Colonel Esmonde, the Irish air leader, retorted—ah, I forget that, too. And then the O'Kelly came in, and there was Dermod O'Brien, and Nolan-Ferrall, and the man who fashioned the new coinage for the Saorstat-Eireinn, and all poets and makers of music, and we sang the old Irish songs all night. . . . So I ought to know what I am talking about.

But I don't. Who, there, ever will? I have never known an Irishman who could explain Ireland. How shall I, who am not one? But I'd cherish an inch or so of paper here to pay in part a debt too large to pay in any way, and say that of all lands, and of all peoples, none has ever met a wanderer with so much mellow wit and so much boisterous sincerity as this green particle in the sea. Now in Tullamore and Trim and Limerick, in Dundrum and Ballina and Roscreagh, in Sligo and Castlebar and Sheefry and Macroom and Dungarvan, it was all alike. The tall men of the town came around and asked about somebody who had gone to America; and would it be better to stay at home? And they filled the bowl and the pipe and had a little of singing. And whenever the visit was marked for an end, and the time came to take the white road to the next place, they would get up a dinner and would make wonderful speeches. The old arts of Erin. Their great poets. The wonder that men the world over should think so steadily and so curiously of this bit of bog-and-hill stuck out in the sea. And their fine regard for America. To which I would reply, with poor words struggling to say it, that the misty beauty of their coasts, their eldritch valleys and broken mountains of the stormy west, found me with tears and a tongue baffled by loveliness. . . .

William Butler Yeats wrapped his rug about him, and talked among his books and priceless prints, and Mrs. Yeats, who was tender and alert for the passingly invalid comfort of the great man, made a dainty tea for us, in that bright, high room. We caught a note of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

broken thought, and spoke in unrelated sentences, so that if I would I couldn't, and if I could I wouldn't, put it down in print. The fine, patient man—how he must loathe the traveler who knocks at his door and asks, "How did you happen to think of writing 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'?" Credit it to me that I asked him no questions; and remark, if you care to, that he spent all that first meeting interviewing me! I pondered it later—anyone in a high place will be shrewd to copy the trick. Make your visitor talk about himself—the most interesting subject known to any man. We used to meet afterwards, in Merrion Square, or Lower Baggott Street, or along by the lovable chaste fane of Cardinal Newman's little University Church—the noble lion head gazing upward in contemplation, the unbroken courtesy of friendship (why should he be kind to me?) always alert.

Macnie gave me a copy of her wonderful cartoon—you have seen it. Yeats sets out from No. 82 Merrion Square to visit AE. AE sets out from No. 84 Merrion Square to visit Yeats. The author of "The Land of Heart's Desire" is gazing at the sky. The bearded prophet of agrarian competence is studying the pavement in meditation. They pass at No. 83. They arrive at each other's houses to find each other absent. (It really happened.) On another day he showed me a manuscript. He was writing a new play—"for my theatre." He still, and justly enough, calls the Abbey his theatre. "It's in prose," I said, critically. "It is less wise now to write a play in verse," he murmured. "The verse may be good and the play not worth it."

Jack Yeats's salon is in a light and sunny quarter. He has changed his whole manner. The brave little pictures of rural Irish life, so swiftly justified by memory, are giving way to mystical and hazy sweeps of a sure and powerful brush. His Sligo horsemen cannot be understood at close hand. You must cross the room to see that in the confusion of brilliant pigments a Killala horseman is mastering his wild stallion on the escalloped edge of the Thursday fair. Three wistful ghosts walk in a great frame, with a Derrygonnelly moor behind them. "What is it about, though?" "I don't know. It just came to me." Mrs. Yeats serves the most delicate tea.

Jack is more an American than most Dubliners. He lived long in New York, but does not mean ever to come back here. His famous father (who will forget the salon with Quin and John Sloan?) came over for a ten-day visit and stayed all his life. Jack, though he knows the last news of the Avenue and the Roaring Forties, is a Sligo man; and his first book was out and going well in the market: "Sligo." "Why did you call it that?" "I met a man in a train who saw me making notes. 'Is it for a book?' he asked. 'It is.' 'Then call it "Sligo," ' said the man, 'for its a lucky name.' " It has little enough to do with Sligo; but heaven be praised the tourists think it is a guide-book and buy it, so that in spite of themselves they have a fine piece of literature in their hands for once anyway. This gifted artist was so uncertain of himself as an author that he used to hide the manuscript so Mrs. Yeats couldn't criticize it. She told me. They laughed.

In America, long ago, Lennox Robinson seemed to me the tallest man I had ever seen on a public platform. In Dublin, where the policemen are all engaged solely because they can look down on the heads of the crowd, and where all warm men begin to grow in a dead heat from six foot two, he seemed normal. He wound his angular contentment around the table-legs and chaffed along in the best mood I ever knew a man to have. In the Abbey, though, he is stern and swift; and then, I think, he likes to forget he is the compiler of the most useful anthology of Irish poetry in the market.

Winifred Letts is a shy and winsome lady, enormously thankful for a slender favor done, and poet to her dainty fingertips. We all went over to help somebody give a collected purse to AE on the occasion of something-or-other. A mountainy spirit in the crowd cast a dark thought on the gift because Russell was going to America: "Twenty years I have said it. He will die there!" Everybody laughed. But everybody shuddered. The mist hangs so steadily over the land, and prophets have no-whither. Gogarty was being gay with his new and comfortably-priced hotel out in Connemara's wilderness. (I like McKeown's, at Leenane, and I shall go there one day for a great time.) I wish I could print the amazing come-all-ye ballad about Oliver St. John Gogarty giving two swans to the River Liffey, but Willy Baldwin, the author, who gave me his original draft of it, swore me to silence. And then suddenly Stephens went off to Paris. Joyce was already there. Yeats was meditating Italy again. Colum had gone to America. The year fell into decay, and autumn frost was stripping the treeless mountains of their changed shrubbery. We took the great boat and came home, across the sea.

And now, in this seaward New England farm, where I write among a younger peasantry to whom the name of Ireland is scarcely, and never willingly, known, I watch the little grey mist coming up over the fields and remember. There were always the small white houses at the reach of the hills, the fog-wisp trailing over the low walls, and the sheep in the old road. Poppies, that we worry so to tame to our own cold gardens, riot in the fields there, and where the brown thatch is poor and ancient the flowers grow in the roof-tree. Pungent and acrid, low-swinging on the evening wind, the peat-smoke drifts. And, trudging down the steady Irish miles, staff in hand (as how many and many a day we were out upon those happy marches!) you turn some corner around the elbow of a Connaught hill and come face to face with wild beauty ineffable. Shall I forget it, even here in my own green peace? Hardly! "For always night and day I hear lake-water lapping with low sounds by the shore." And "tonight, all Ireland round, the curlews call." . . . And the rest of it. . . . And I have a date, what's more, in the Phoenix Park for a day in spring.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PITFALLS OF CRITICISM

By RICHARD BURTON

MANY difficulties dog the footsteps of criticism. To perceive literary values, justly to appraise contemporary literature, requires such breadth of mind, catholicity of taste and, above all, such independence of temporary tests and assumed standards, that a critic who can possess these qualifications rises to the rank of a creator, challenging the poet and novelist in importance.

As we examine literary history, we cannot but be astonished to find how commonly the most authoritative opinion, expressed concerning contemporary product, goes wrong when passed on by the final judgment of time. No critic, however eminent, seems exempt from this verdict. In 1820, Thomas Love Peacock, friend of Shelley, and of high critical standing, wrote his famous "The Four Ages of Poetry." As a direct result, Shelley gave the world his "In Defense of Poetry." What Peacock said of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott and Byron, fairly makes one gasp today, for he scornfully mauled men who were to become classics:

> To some such perversion of intellect we owe that egregious confraternity of rhymesters, known by the name of the Lake Poets; who certainly did receive and communicate to the world some of the most extraordinary poetical impressions that ever were heard of, and ripened into models of public virtue, too splendid to need illustration. . . . Mr. Scott digs up the poachers and cattle-stealers of the ancient border. Lord Byron cruises for thieves and pirates on the shores of the Morea and among the Greek Islands. Mr. Southey wades through ponderous volumes of travels and old chronicles, from which he carefully selects all that is false, useless and absurd, as being essentially poetical; and when he has a commonplace book full of monstrosities, strings them into an epic. Mr. Wordsworth picks up village legends from old women and sextons; and Mr. Coleridge, to the valuable information acquired from similar sources, superadds the dreams of crazy theologians and the mysticisms of German metaphysics, and favors the world with visions in verse, in which the quadruple elements of sexton, old women, Jeremy Taylor and Emanuel Kant, are harmonized into a delicious poetical compound.

A later instance: When Longfellow died, almost exactly half a century ago, the English people, expressing the best judgment of the day, placed the American poet's bust in the poets' corner of Westminster Abbey. It remains the only recognition of an American man of letters in that storied haunt of the great. Walter Page is there as a diplomat, not as a writer. Compare the estimate of Longfellow in the twentieth century!

The fact is that some fad or fashion of the moment is continually confused in criticism with contributions which obey the permanent principles of art, and really stand for sound advancement in literature. It seems well-nigh impossible for the contemporary, no matter how well he may be equipped for his task, to disentangle the real from the spurious, the ephemeral from the lasting. His personal contacts with authors, the loud noises emanating from the commercial efforts of publishers seeking publicity for their wares, the jealousies, quarrels, animosities, which time will take care of and dismiss to oblivion, all tend to disqualify our critic today from trustworthy estimates of the work of his fellows. And always hovering over him, though he know it not, is the *Zeitgeist,* that spirit of the time which is a subtle influence conditioning all our feeling and thinking, and as sure to change as the generations are to succeed each other. Literary history, I repeat, must sober any critic's reflections.

And then, the unbelievable brevity of these shibboleths and standards which are supposed to rule and settle reputations, and establish canons of taste. It is worth illustrating. No further back than 1915, the so-called new poetry in America was in full vogue. Amy Lowell was telling the world about free verse and the imagists, and anyone who wrote rhymes and the stanzaic forms of convention was a suspect, or, worse, cast into a limbo of outer darkness. Now, this very year of grace, a popular poet of the day, Miss Millay, is received with all but frenzied acclaim for a volume of—what? Fifty-two sonnets, forsooth, using that so overwritten, stale, traditional form in verse, a form in which not hundreds but thousands of poets who have English as their tongue (to say nothing of those using other languages) have voiced their song; a form which is emblazoned by the great names of Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Wordsworth, Rossetti, Mrs. Browning. Some thirty-five years ago E. C. Stedman, then confessedly our leading critic of poetry, expressed to me the opinion that nobody should any more write sonnets: he deemed it had been done sufficiently with the lordly examples before us, and threatened to be done to death. And, as if this adoption of the form were not enough of a throw-back, Miss Millay writes not in the Petrarchan but in the Shakespearean sonnet. In other words, she runs all the risk of monotony derived from the closing rhymed couplet, whereas the Italian form allows of such variation in the sestette as to escape it. And does anybody now care about this astounding return to the traditions, this complete turning the back upon that school which, as I said, seemed tyrannously dominant in critical and popular regard only these pitiably few years ago? Not in the least. No critic has even seemed to think it worth a mention.

Here let personal testimony be admitted. For the last fifteen years the present writer has been associated with small groups of persons whose business it was to award Pulitzer prizes. The survey included the best

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

book of American poetry of the year, the best play, the best piece of fiction and the best biography. One thing has been learned, if nothing else, and if not known before: that there is not, and I firmly add, never will be, complete agreement in any such choice. Indeed, the disagreements are amazing. Why? Let me try for an explanation.

Any literary composition, in whatever form, may be regarded in three ways: as a work of art, as a piece of life (an author's reaction to or interpretation of life) or as a revelation of personality. It is comparatively easy for critics to get together on how a thing is done: its skill, its technical excellence, its beauty of form. I say "comparatively," because even here there will always be some difference of opinion. But if that were the only test, criticism and critical opinion would be a May-day pastime compared with the complex thing it really is. The trouble begins to mount up and become formidable the minute we consider literary product as interpretation. Because that means a personal view of the complicated mystery called life. There are as many aspects of life, and reactions to life, as there are people writing and thinking about it. You approach a given book containing a piece of life, personally witnessed to, with a hundred limitations of experience, opinion, prejudice, constitutional bias; so do I. Why, then, should we expect to come to a complacent unity of view on some other fellow's idea about life? We should not, and we do not.

Ambrose Bierce is critically acknowledged to have written stories of imaginative horror on a level with those written by Poe; but try his masterpiece, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," as I have, on many readers, and you shall find that they reject it. As art? Not at all. Because it is a too-painful analysis of a terrible moment in a man's life when his thoughts as he strangles to death are set down by that grim chronicler, Bierce. People, in other words, repudiate it as a treatment of life. To say that critics do not, is not sufficient as a reply; for readers, the more intelligent and thoughtful patrons of literature, have much to do in the end with literary reputation, and the placing of authors. No, until time stands still and literature is no more, even trained persons, striving to award merit and grade it, will fail to agree on the relative worth, as subject, of some morbid, or too intensely personal and special recording of human experience.

Add to this a marked tendency of our time, and you get confusion confounded. More and more, as the nineteenth century has become the twentieth, and the present century has forged on to finish its first third, has criticism been influenced by the ever-increasing interest in personality. A book has won attention and regard as a human document, aside from its artistic merit or its importance based on the treatment of life. This interest, begun in the psychologic laboratories, and outflowering in the personal experimenting of writers like Lawrence, Proust, Joyce and Pirandello, has given increased attention to subjectivity and introversion, in contrast with the healthy objectivity of the past; and has introduced more and more of the pathologic into contemporary letters. Grant that a part of the interest in a Lawrence or a Joyce is to be found in their daring departures from older traditional methods, is it not certain that an appreciable part also of their attraction comes from a study of them as strange, tortured personalties? No age before ours has taken quite so keen a relish in, and indulged in so painful a scrutiny of, traits and tendencies especially engaging the attention of the psychiatrists. No use to blame it all on Freud and his followers. Such writers are symptomatic in a period obsessed with scientific concepts, a period hastily, often crudely, converting the findings of the laboratory into material for literary use. The outer physical world, the world of geography and discovery, has been pretty well covered. The deeps and darks of the human ego remain our favorite terra incognita today. Enters, then, the personal equation, the emphasis not on the book, nor on the representation of life, so much as on the man behind the book, the psychologic riddle offered by a writer whose contribution, detached from the ever-fascinating quest of his soul's secret, might be rated as unimportant, even negligible. And by the union, in undue proportion, of these three tests, is critical counsel darkened, and the doctors disagree as perhaps never before. Once, main stress was on the product itself. Later, on the execution, the art. Now, for the moment, morbid personality would appear to take precedence in the three-ring spectacle offered by modern art.

Out of such welter, does anything clear or of encouragement issue? To answer sadly in the negative—and why deny that in some moods this is a temptation? —is like giving up the critical cause. Which were a pity, since sound, trained criticism, large-visioned and constructive, was never so vitally needed as now; and since, moreover, every age making a fine showing in the other creative forms of expression, has had its able criticism. At least, it seems to me, any critic worth the name can try to include in his culture such awareness of the best in the past that he will be able to approach any current example seen in the perspective of time. He will strive to judge not by the immediate arc but rather by the full circle. That should ever be culture's aim and justification. It gives point to the position of the humanists. And one other thing he should strive to attain with prayer and fasting: the sound mind in the sound body. The endless vagaries of latter-day writing and critical appreciation can only be corrected by critics whose ideal it is to pursue the golden mean, and (while doing justice to any and all manifestations of the human spirit, caught in a book called literature) to preserve such a sense of relative values and so to perceive that there is, after all, a sort of family likeness in the "things that are most excellent," as to make him a wise guide, a trustworthy reporter, a true interpreter of the beauty which is, both as goal and as accomplishment, literature's ageless concern.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NIGHT-BLOOMING CEREUS

By ROBERT SPARKS WALKER

THOUGH I had received many invitations to see the night-blooming cereus open its blossom, I purposely postponed this witnessing of the gorgeous flower for fifteen years. I never grow tired observing a flower that opens with quick action, though noiseless, as the moonflower spreads its handsome blossom, but when they open slowly, the performance is little more engaging to the mind than that of the slow movements of the minute hand on the face of a clock.

But finally when I went out to dine on the evening of September 14, my host and hostess left me sitting on the front veranda beneath a bright light with flowers chiefly to entertain me. Two night-blooming cereus plants were perched in large pots near the edge of the porch, and since the scanning of the evening newspaper consumed only a few minutes, I was left with the three nodding cereus flower buds, slowly spreading their brownish, ropelike calyxes directly before my eyes. The white streaks gave promise of the corolla inside, and as the end was already spread large enough to admit a lead pencil, I knew it would not be long before the blossom would be sending forth its rich perfume. It was seven o'clock when the "cracks" in the outside of the flower began to show the white streaks so plainly, and by eight o'clock the flower was open; it was not spread wide until half an hour later, presenting the usual remarkable scene which looks more like a celestial creation than anything terrestrial.

I measured one of the flower tubes and found it precisely six inches long. That meant it would take an insect with a tongue a half-foot long to be able to sip the nectar in the flower, and having studied the pink-spotted hawk-moth (*Herse cingulata*), I predicted that it would surely be on hand sometime soon.

Directly beneath one of the cereus blossoms near the edge of the porch, sat a dead horned toad, the handsomest and most perfect reptile specimen I have ever seen. It was fat and plump, and was somewhat bleached.

The day previous, a man connected with one of the leading motion-picture theatres in my town called me to the telephone and reported the discovery of a queer and dangerous looking animal in the theatre, and urgently invited me to come and identify it. Since I was preparing to go for a half-day's journey, I called on a friend whose office was near the theatre, and asked him to answer the call for me. As it happened, he was my host the following evening, and this is how the horned toad came to be sitting out on his porch, perfectly lifelike, although lifeless.

A Negro janitor at the theatre, who had never before seen a horned toad, became frightened and hit the harmless lizard in the head, and now it was dead; yet it presented such a natural pose that it was deceiving to the most critical eyes. It had been living in the theatre so long that the usual rusty skin and spines that covered its body were more greyish in color and clear, looking much like the grey oak bark lichens. Its spines felt as if they were made of rubber, and were not hard and prickly to the touch. Perhaps it had found cockroaches abundant in the theatre and had grown fat on them.

The pink-spotted hawk-moth is almost as large as a ruby-throated humming-bird, and gets about with as much grace and speed, if not swifter than the bird. The cereus blossom gave off a rich and pleasing perfume that reminded me of the odor of a newly opened moonflower, all of which seemed to be a lure for the identical moth that visits the moonflower.

There were six of us sitting out on the bright-lighted front veranda, and promptly at nine o'clock a brisk humming of what seemed to be a small motor plane drew all eyes and ears to it. Since I had predicted this visit, those present seemed to look upon me as a person having prophetic vision. When we caught sight of the living engine, the huge moth was dashing toward the cereus blossom that hung directly above the horned toad, which sat with its head in a poise as if looking up at the flower, waitingly patiently to snap up the first insect-visitor that ventured there. Thrice the pink-spotted hawk-moth ventured near, but could not make up its mind to sip the nectar, for to attempt such a thing would cause it to turn its back upon the toad, and all living creatures know instinctively that not to be on guard for one's life may mean instant death.

The large moth gave up the cereus blossom that hung above the horned toad, and went speedily to the other blossoms where it was safe. It unrolled its long tongue, which was carried in a tight coil, like a small coil of rope, and when it thrust this organ down into the floral tube, its wings made such rapid vibrations that the insect hovered in the atmosphere like an airship, its wings fanning the pollen onto its body. When it moved to the next flower the pollen was distributed to the pistil. An exclamation of enthusiasm burst forth from the spectators, who were thrilled as they had never been thrilled before by the sight of small things. The fact is, they found the pink-spotted hawk-moth more wonderful and more of a living miracle than is the night-blooming cereus itself.

Every person present craved a closer view of the wonderful moth, and I showed them how it might be caught. My host, a large man, in shirt-sleeves, reached for a net and as the moth turned to go, the bright light blinded it. The perplexed creature dashed to the ceiling, and began bouncing over it as an airplane bounces over the ground on landing, while my host leaped frantically into the air, and struggled manfully to get the tinseled treasure entangled in the net. As luck would have it, the net became entangled on a projecting nail. It could have been quickly removed by any person acting calmly; but as everyone present was fearful that the hawk-moth was about to make its escape, it required ten times the moments to disentangle the threads. However, we learned there was no reason to be in a great hurry, for the bright incandescent light held the hawk-moth a safe prisoner to the porch ceiling. While the poor thing beat wildly about over our heads, its eyes reflected the light like two peculiar coals of live fire. Wonderful eyes that will permit a creature to fly through the dark night at more than sixty miles an hour without bumping into anything! No wonder that, if necessary demands, this huge hawk-moth can collect nectar from flowers in Chattanooga, Tennessee, my hown town, and in a very short while be visiting the same species of flowers in Birmingham, Alabama, or Atlanta, Georgia.

The hawk-moth was captured. Since I had been studying this species of moth for more than fifteen years, I took charge of the prisoner and explained it to the audience. Slowly the tongue was unwound, and when it was straightened out, it looked like a tendril from a grape-vine, and measured more than six inches. Holding a hawk-moth in the hand, one is aware of its small body as a living engine, and it reminds the holder of grasping a small pig in the hands, when every muscle in the pig's body seems to vibrate. We turned the moth loose, but like the drunkard who returns to his bottle, back the long-tongue creature flew, and dashed again wildly about the porch ceiling. Finally he was caught and carried into the darkness, where he was tossed into the air beyond the sight of bright lights, and away he went on his nocturnal journey in quest of more long-tubed flowers—flying on and on until a sweet odor would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deflect it from its course, and a huge white floral beacon guide it safely into another port.

As one would naturally suppose, this question arose among the visitors: Does the night-blooming cereus choose its opening hours to meet the convenience of the hawk-moths, or do the hawk-moths come out at night to meet the convenience of the night-blooming cereus? It seems to me that the preponderance of evidence is in favor of the former proposition, because so far as is known, the hawk-moths with the extremely long tongues are the only insects that are capable of reaching the nectar in the long floral tubes of such flowers as the night-blooming cereus and the moonflower, and incidentally of carrying pollen from one flower to another.

He who grows the night-blooming cereus in the greenhouse or indoors, must not believe that his is the only plant that is to open its flowers on a certain night, for inquiry will reveal that this plant has a very regular habit of blooming about the same date, and those belonging to neighbors are likely to open their flowers at the identical time.

The person who loves nature as well as art, will sense a feeling of shame when he begins the task of tearing up such a handsome and delicate-looking creation as a night-blooming cereus. He may feel that he is as much a vandal as if he were destroying some masterpiece of painting. Truly the open flower of the night-blooming cereus may be properly called a masterpiece. "Christ in the cradle" is one of its romantic names, and it is easy for the person with imagination to see such a likeness in this delicate but gorgeous flower.

Knowing that its beauty would be spoiled by morning, I took a microscope, a rule, a pair of scissors, and a pencil and paper for keeping a record. When my work was finished, I found the night-blooming cereus had a pistil ten inches long, hollow, pure white, with a stigma cut into nineteen whipcord divisions, making a handsome funnel-like blossom in itself (the "guiding star," it is called) protruding from the end of the petals, and far beyond the stamens.

There were ninety-three stamens lying flat, pasted tightly to the inner wall of the flower, and farther into the blossom were 228 stamens lying loosely, reminding one of the silks found on an immature ear of corn. A total of 321 stamens, all with anthers, is a big bundle of treasures to tuck within one flower. Forty-three sepals, some pinkish and ropelike in appearance, portrayed a decided contrast to the white petals. The flower-tube ripped open, its length of six inches revealed a rich supply of nectar near the base, and some of it was as thick as honey. About one inch of the lower end is given to ovaries, but I doubt if many of them grown indoors mature, for the reason that people have so long been propagating the cactus from cuttings that nature seems not anxious to produce seeds that are not used, as we find in the commercial varieties of the banana, which are grown from slips.

Selenicereus, the scientific name for the cactus we call night-blooming cereus, contains more than twenty known species, and many hybrids. That some of them are utilized in the manufacture of a heart-tonic is not surprising, and the psychological effect of a glimpse into one of the newly opened blossoms is enough to carry the observer into the celestial realms of thought.

The unexcelled beauty of the blossom of the night-blooming cereus is no more wonderful than the plant's habit of opening its flowers to meet the convenience of its best-known insect-friend, which can collect its nectar and properly distribute the pollen. The flower itself and this pink-spotted hawk-moth are two of the most remarkable creations to be found anywhere in the realm of nature.

FUTURES IN ANTIQUES

By MARGARET M. WILLIAMSEN

I WHILED away one afternoon viewing antique furniture at the Art Institute, not because I am an antiquarian but because on a hot midsummer afternoon there is no more comfortable spot than the period rooms of the Institute. They have been very carefully buried in the lowest basement of the farthest wing and thus are proofed against all onslaughts of the weather.

I had been there for some time—long enough to convince my conscience that no one cared to be interviewed by me that day—and, to that moment, was as comfortable as any individual might be sitting on a hard bench and thinking of nothing at all, when the pleasant vacancy of my mind was broken into by the entrance of a gaunt, hook-nosed woman and a little, rotund man whose fat neck bubbled over the top of his collar.

Theirs was no such laudable purpose as escaping the heat. They had come in to view a worm hole in the leg of a Queen Anne chair and, I gathered, a great many breakfasts had been ruined by the worm that did, or the worm that did not, bore the leg of the said Queen Anne chair. The lady contended the hole was not made by a worm, the gentleman was equally certain that it had been and went so far as to crawl under the ropes that kept the chair from vulgar touch. I am sure he could have named the species of worm but was for the moment probably seized with a streak of discretion and for the time being dropped the argument.

This episode pierced the vacuum surrounding my mind to reimpress upon me the fact that some persons do come to the period rooms of the Institute to look at antiques. And I fell to pondering on the future of antiques. In a hundred years or two hundred years what will gaunt, hook-nosed women and little, rotund men whose fat necks bubble over the tops of their collars argue about over the breakfast coffee?

Probably the lady of the house will say to John, her husband, "Well, I'll take you down to the Institute and show you the dirt in that refrigerator!"

And John will say, "Now, Mary, my dear, I wouldn't be too harsh with that poor woman. After all these years, it is rather hard to say who is to blame for that dirt."

But his wife will insist that the long-dead owner of the mechanical refrigerator was a slovenly housekeeper, and so the two will take themselves to the Institute, ostensibly to settle the question, actually each to become more firm in the original opinion.

There will stand an early model of a mechanical refrigerator, respectfully roped off, its white enamel peeling in spots to give it an authentic air of antiquity, and its door open for all to gape at its barren interior.

Mary will exclaim, "I told you so!" John, if he is a wise husband, will tacitly agree and wish the museum authorities had more sense than to leave the door open.

In the homes of those who will go in for antiques on their own, an early model of a mechanical refrigerator will make an ideal living-room piece. When guests drop in for their afternoon highballs, the owner of one of these prized refrigerators will entertain them by turning on the mechanism for a short time. Very affluent collectors will own a large collection of refrigerators of various models and periods, though that would entail some difficulties, as antiquarians, then as now, will not be likely to recognize the limitations of their living-rooms.

For those with no bent for refrigerators, there will be kindred spirits, radios. It is to be hoped that all the squeak of the early models will have gone out of them by that time for not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

even the improved liquor, which ought to be coming along one of these days, will make guests drop in for afternoon highballs, if the host insists upon regaling them with the squeals and squawks which we have endured over the air.

Some day that very art institute which I sat musing on that hot summer afternoon, will receive a telephone call and a guggling-gurgling voice from the other end of the wire will say, "I am Mrs. W. Wiffington Wittington." The person at the Institute end of the wire will think fast and say as intelligently as possible under the circumstances, "Oh, yes, Mrs. Wiffington." Mrs. Wittington will be too excited over the import of her message to notice the mistake in her name and will announce, "I am going to make the Art Institute a gift of twentieth-century billboards, if the Institute will provide a W. Wiffington Wittington room, some railroad and steamship posters and some magazine advertisements." It will take Mrs. W. Wiffington Wittington another half-hour to complete her message and she will end with a flourish, "Of course you will call up the newspapers? I know the editors will be so glad to have some news for their papers."

When the collection of billboards is set, the posters and ads mounted, and Mrs. W. Wiffington Wittington and her cohorts in the Art and Antique League give a tea and exclaim to each other for an entire afternoon, "My, aren't they lovely!" and "They are charming!" the exhibit will be thrown open to the general public.

The general public, if it is true to its antecedents, will glance once at the billboards and say, "We got bigger and better ones than those right here in this town!"

Society's belles dames will smile out from the magazine advertisements, telling readers how they keep their youth and beauty and the anxious readers of generations hence may ask with impunity, "To what youth and beauty do they refer?"

It will be necessary to turn only a few more pages to make the sceptic forget his doubts about the youth and beauty of society leaders and wonder how twentieth-centurians ever survived all the ills for which remedies were offered in the magazines. The sentimental, too, will find plenty on which to exercise their emotions as, for instance, the happy groom about to implant the first kiss on the lips of his happy bride and, in heavy black type suspended like the sword of Damocles, the words, "Till Breath Do Us Part," Yes, some cynic will ask, "Did he wait until then to find that out?"

Institute attendants of the future will be prepared to answer numerous queries of literal-minded persons who wonder, after seeing all the toothpaste ads, if people of their age were largely composed of mouth, jaw and teeth. They will be told "yes" or "no," depending upon how the particular attendant feels upon the particular day. No less than a dozen smiling, happy ladies in Mrs. Wittington's collection will tell how to avoid pink tooth brush, film, pyorrhea, etc.

The little sister of the toothbrush lady will be the "great American girl" who chews gum twice daily to eradicate wrinkles, prevent a muscular collapse and develop a beautiful mouth. All that will be the reward for two sticks of gum daily, at one cent each, or three packages for ten cents at the cut-rate stores.

More beauty miracles than heaven dreamed of (or saw) will be unfolded on page after page of the magazine ads. But why linger when there will be travel and adventure in the next exhibit room in the railroad and steamship posters?

A smiling individual, whose low bow will indicate that he must at least be an ex-duke of some place or other, will bow the visitors into the fairy-land of the travel bureau's mental meanderings. The ex-duke, of course, will only be on the poster. Possibly because he cannot speak English, above him in black face will be the words, "Twelve Countries in Twelve Days—See Europe." One will know by his smile that he really means what he says. Those who view this exhibit will not likely appreciate their opportunities, but the truth of the matter will be they will have seen more of Europe than those who made the trip. At least there will be no tour leader driving them from poster to poster without stopping for breath, on the plea that they must catch a train for here or there.

In another poster, headlined "See Rural America," there will be a cow, more "cowey" than usual, who will stop chewing her cud until the train, dashing through the scenery at a mile a minute, has passed. How passengers could have viewed the countryside from twentieth-century trains not even Einstein will have left an opinion. It is quite probable that the travelers always decided they had much nicer scenery at home and were not interested in looking at other people's sky, land and water.

Now if it will be the sea the future antiquarian hankers after, he will have it aplenty, for steamship companies were omniverous advertisers. There will be Viking ships, if one may believe the steamship company advertisements, that go bounding over the main. It will be presupposed, however, that the hardy adventurers who booked passage on these boats were not compelled to be too Vikingish. The craft, no doubt, were equipped with a few little conveniences like hot and cold water, bedrooms and at least one swimming-pool. What was a twentieth-century ocean-going vessel that could not boast even a tank? There may have been a few in that sorry condition but the steamship companies were not proud of them.

For those whose ambitions were social rather than adventurous there were trim little craft, motor-driven, that looked like twin sisters of the private yachts that used to fill up the Sunday picture sections of newspapers. A great many snapshots of these came back to friends at home with the hastily scrawled message, "Just put into port on Lord Thrackenwacks's yacht after cruising the Irish Sea. Isn't she a beaut?" As the folks at home had no way of knowing whether the sea were Irish or some other nationality, they had to accept the message at face value. Sometimes the travelers mailed home scenes from on board but in such cases they had to be careful. Those undesirable appearing persons who always managed to take the same tour had a way of getting into the pictures, thus ruining them for home consumption.

Not all the posters, however, will be devoted to Viking ships and the twin sisters of private yachts. Some of the steamship companies were 100-percent Americans at least in their advertising methods, for at frequent intervals the posters blazon forth the message that the S.S. Such-and-Such is the largest liner afloat with this or that distinction. Perhaps, the S.S. Such-and-Such was the largest boat painted red but that, nevertheless, entitled it to use the superlative. The tourists who chose the largest red ocean-going liner had one more thing to write home about.

This opening of the closet door on the skeletons of the future to parade them before the flesh has fallen from their bones may be a wanton ruination of future enjoyment and prosperity. Just think of the women who must have a career who will find it by dealing in Toby mugs of Herbert Hoover with the front of his "tummy" a ragged edge, or of Al Smith with the end of his nose missing, or in cute little figurines or atrocious cocktail glasses. Just think of the business depressions that will be avoided if the proper portion of the consumer's dollar goes into trade for antiques.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PLAY

By RICHARD DANA SKINNER

The Streets of New York

IT IS hard to say with just what pleasantly malicious intent Lawrence Langner's New York Repertory Company selected "The Streets of New York" as their first Broadway exhibit of the season. The sub-title of this ancient comedy melodrama by Dion Boucicault reads, "Poverty Is No Crime." Moreover, the play opens in the middle of the financial panic of 1837 by way of prologue, and continues the rest of its action during the panic of 1857. Needless to say, dozens of lines in the old play, for all their amusing formality and stiffness, strike so aptly on the ears of present-day listeners that the audience is frequently in roars of laughter over remarks and situations which would never have raised the flicker of an eyebrow in 1929.

But first of all, a word of comment is due on the New York Repertory Company itself. I have remarked many times in this department over the last year that the future of the theatre lay very largely in the hands of permanent acting companies. It has been an obvious fact, ever since the talking pictures took over the major part of so-called "show business," that economic necessity would drive actors to band together for the purpose of obtaining relatively stable annual salaries and to work up a perfection of ensemble which would make it possible for the stage to compete with the more superficial entertainment of the screen. The Theatre Guild and Miss Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre have been advance agents, so to speak, of a movement which is growing in proportion and in strength from month to month. Only two weeks ago, we were privileged to see one of the best directed plays of the season in Paul Green's "The House of Connelly," acted by a group of players who had been rehearsing together all summer. The same idea, to a certain extent, is behind the New York Repertory Company. Lawrence Langner, who has been for many years one of the important members of the governing board of the Theatre Guild, assembled his company of expert actors last summer at Westport, Connecticut, and in a refurbished old barn gave considerable delight to the surrounding countryside, by rehearsing and presenting the plays which are now to be part of his New York season. It is obvious that his plan served the triple purpose of providing pleasant employment for the actors during the summer, of creating a smoothly working ensemble, and of testing out the responsiveness of representative audiences in advance of New York production. It is a matter of considerable interest whether the rehearsing of a large number of plays in this fashion will prove to have achieved anything approaching the amazing quality of the work of the Group Theatre which confined its summer efforts to one play only. The answer can only be given after viewing successively the various productions now scheduled. These are to include "The Bride the Sun Shines On" by Will Cotton, Shakespeare's "As You Like It," Ibsen's "The Pillars of Society," a modern play, "The Comic Artist," by Susan Glaspell and Norman Matson, and "Lady Godiva," a satiric comedy written by Mr. Langner himself. It is also the ambition of this group to present a play in the fashion of the Commedia Dell' Arte and a play by Molière.

As to the first production, "The Streets of New York" made its theatrical bow in the winter of 1857 at a time when the country was in the grip of a panic depression very similar to the one we have just passed through. On the original program, there was a note describing the play as "a new drama of peculiar effect and powerful interest, written to illustrate the present condition of this city." It must be admitted, of course, at the outset, that the Langner company presents this play in very much the same spirit that the Hoboken enthusiasts presented the same author's "After Dark" a few seasons ago. The Langner production, however, has the advantage of a very highly skilled group of actors who are able to do their "spoofing" of the old lines and situations in exactly the shade of restraint required to give them their most delightful humor. Until the Hoboken experiment went wild, it was delightful but done in frankly amateurish fashion. Mr. Langner has brought to the caricature of the old melodrama the inimitable skill of such artists as Romney Brent, Dorothy Gish, Moffat Johnston, Rollo Peters, Frank Conlan and others.

It is a curious fact that nothing is more difficult in acting than the art of caricature. If it is carried too far, it becomes obvious and boring after the first few minutes. This is particularly true in a play whose original intention was serious. The Langner company have achieved the happy faculty of conveying all their satirical intent without obscuring the original design of the author. In this way, they manage to keep a great deal of the excitement of the original play and in a curious way to restore the mood of another day. As one passes through the conventional stages of villainy, pathos and triumphant virtue, one recognizes clearly all the elements which continue even to this day to make up a good play. At the same time, one is able to measure the distance in convention and viewpoint that separates our own day from the middle of the nineteenth century.

What we have aparently done—and by "we" I mean theatre audiences—is merely to demand more shadings and more immediate colors in our drama. Nothing essential is changed in the spirit of melodrama during this period. Whether you take such comparatively recent plays as "Broadway" and "The Front Page," or "The Streets of New York," you will find the same characters and the same situations and will discover simply that in the older play everything has been indicated in black and white outline, whereas today it is carefully conveyed in all three dimensions and with the full palette of colors. The modern villain is still a villain, but neither his villainies nor his better impulses are labeled. The audience of today is expected to draw its own conclusions, whereas the audience of seventy years ago must have taken particular delight in reading the labels which the author pasted on the back of every character. In this sense, the old melodramas were nearer to the original theatrical forms of the morality play.

As to individual performances in the current revival, the crown easily goes to Romney Brent for his work as the sub-villain who reforms. Dorothy Gish is appropriately sweet and fainting as the tender heroine, and Moffat Johnston is competently sinister as the banker villain. Sam Wren, as the heroine's noble brother, and also in his between-the-acts singing and dancing, is excellent.

After all is said and done, perhaps the greatest value to be extracted from "The Streets of New York" is the sheer delight of relaxation which we get in the company of a group of finished artists who know how to maintain theatrical illusion and at the same time to wink surreptitiously across the footlights. The occasion provides an evening of unadulterated delight. (At the Forty-eighth Street Theatre.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Guest Room

THIS play, by Arthur Wilmurt, is the first production of the season by Carol Sax. It just misses being a highly amusing character sketch of one of those eternal persons without whom no family can hold up its head in pride. I refer to the maiden aunt.

Aunt Lottie Powers (played by Helen Lowell to the hilt) is one of those sugary sweet persons with a rhinoceros hide whose first ambition in life is to plant herself in the guest room of some near relative or friend, and whose second ambition is to run that household once she is in it. She also has the delighful habit of making everybody about her turn into an invalid. If, up to the present, they have been strong and competent, she manages to make them feel that they should take to their bed and resign all earthly cares into her hands. This, in time, is apt to result in the gradual decline and death of the person so treated, whereupon Aunt Lottie is forced to seek another home.

In fact, "The Guest Room" opens with a scene right after the funeral of Aunt Lottie's latest victim. Before the funeral meats are cold, so to speak, she is casting about to find her next resting place. She manages to ensnare a most independent dowager through appealing to the latter's one weakness about a flower garden. But although this answers the immediate question of a new home, Aunt Lottie is still most unwilling to relinquish her hold over her niece, Janet Fairley. In fact, Mr. Wilmurt makes it very plain that within his experience people of this sort put out any number of tentacles and are not content until they have fastened them upon the largest possible number of persons. Aunt Lottie does not want her niece to marry and manages to make that young lady wholly miserable.

By the end of the second act, Aunt Lottie is forcibly put out of Mrs. Martin's house after a year of residence, and although her niece has married by this time, decides that whether she is wanted or not, the niece must provide her new home. That the niece's husband is thus driven off to South America in despair is a very small matter in Aunt Lottie's life.

Up to this point, the play hangs together fairly well and although the character of Aunt Lottie is considerably overdrawn in minor respects, it does provide something comparable to the theme, let us say, of "Craig's Wife" and the substance of an amusing play. In the last act, however, the author's ingenuity is quite unequal to the task of bringing together the loose ends. The niece's husband returns from South America and there is considerable evidence of an impasse all round, until, by an obvious theatrical trick, Aunt Lottie is led to believe that she can find still another home with a congenial friend. This is a very weak and inconclusive ending of a problem that will be instantly recognized in any regulation family throughout the length and breadth of this land. The author asks, as his theme question, "What shall we do with certain maiden aunts?" But he never answers the question. (At the Biltmore Theatre.)

Mystery

I must not tell—for words would surely fail—
The glamorous sweet magic of the pines,
Nor how across the breadth of hill and dale,
Too dear for speech, a lambent glory shines.

But when I see, through something more than sight,
The Mystery that has no other name,
My heart goes racing in its wild delight,
And all my soul burns in me like a flame.

JAMES LARKIN PEARSON.

COMMUNICATIONS

THE CENTRAL PROBLEM

Waterbury, Conn.

TO the Editor: In THE COMMONWEAL of October 7 I find your article, "The Central Problem," which is apropos of Mr. John Haynes Holmes's prediction of the speedy sweeping away of all forms of Christianity, including Catholicism, and I am greatly interested. Particularly interesting I find your reference to Donoso Cortes. It seems well worth while to recall at this time the story of the conversion of this distinguished Spaniard because of two points—Christianity, and the poor man at our gate.

The story was told by Cortes himself in the Paris salon of Madame Swetchine, that brilliant Russian woman, whose wide knowledge, great goodness and profound wisdom made her the valued friend of princes, philosophers and saints. The time was that of the Third French Revolution, and Cortes was serving as ambassador from Spain to Paris. The story is retold by the Comte de Falloux in his work on Madame Swetchine:

"I had arrived at middle life," said Donoso Cortes, one evening, at the salon of Madame Swetchine, "and the reading of certain French and Latin works had destroyed my belief in Christianity. Still, I considered myself one of the most honest of men. I accompanied the Queen Christina to Paris, and there became acquainted with a Spaniard, Don Manuel——. He was a simple-minded man, upright, not at all brilliant; very religious, and devoted to good works. I watched him and said to myself, 'It is strange! I am certainly an honest man; Don Manuel is an honest man; but his honesty is different from mine. There is something in his honesty that I cannot account for, and which, I think, renders it superior to mine. Whence comes it?' I mentioned it to Don Manuel himself. He replied with simplicity, 'I am a Christian, and you are not.' The remark struck me; I often thought of it; but I had not quite made it out when my brother fell ill at Madrid. I hurried to Spain; and when I arrived I found his situation very dangerous. Once, when I was nursing him, I repeated my conversation with Don Manuel. 'Yes,' said he, 'he gave you the true reason.' He then explained the remark; and what he said touched me so deeply that, when he died, a few days later, I thought more of his confessor, whom he bequeathed to me, than of his fortune." One of those present remarked, "Certainly, M. l'Ambassadeur, it was by God's great mercy that you were so suddenly enlightened when you had not thought to seek for light. Was there any peculiar circumstance in your life through which you might be said to have deserved such a favor?" "I do not recall any," replied Donoso Cortes; "my life has been very commonplace. Yet perhaps one feeling of mine has been pleasing to God. I have never regarded the poor man who sat at my gate as any other than my brother."

HELEN F. MCMAHON.

AN INDICTMENT

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editor: The letter of the Reverend John McCarthy, appearing in your issue of September 16, reminded me of a remark I heard the late Chief Judge Alton B. Parker make some years ago, that, as a rule, Protestant ministers are not well grounded in philosophy.

When an attempt is made to present the prohibition question as a moral issue the following should always be kept in mind:

1. So far from being a Christian principle, it is distinctly anti-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christian. The first miracle performed by Christ was to change water into wine for the use of guests at a wedding feast, and almost His last act on earth was to change wine into His very Blood. Therefore (and I say it with all reverence) if the mere use of alcoholic beverages is immoral *per se,* Christ Himself committed immoral acts.

2. If it be assumed that morality is involved, the state is not, or should not be, concerned. The great mass of the people suffer under the delusion that all human conduct can be regulated by law; yet with personal habits and conduct the state has no right to interfere. The state is not absolute. Its sphere of activity is confined to certain well-defined limits, and if these limits are exceeded, conflict is always potential; in extreme cases, inevitable. The purpose of government is the mutual protection of the whole people and each individual citizen in their rights to life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness. A social compact is made by which the whole people covenant with each individual and each individual with the whole people that they will be governed by certain laws to be enacted to secure these purposes for the public good. Therefore the powers of government are exhausted when the object of its enactments is to protect the rights of, or redress the wrongs done to, either society or the individual and to raise sufficient revenue for its support. Even punishment for crime is not based on morality. It is founded on the infraction of individual or public rights. Unquestionably under this view, drastic regulation of the liquor traffic may be warranted and perhaps justified, but absolute prohibition of use presents an entirely different question. It then amounts to a destruction of a natural right and becomes an arbitrary and wrongful abuse of power.

3. "Abusus non tollit usum" is a fundamental moral principle. The zealot who tortures his intellect into believing that the correction of the evil of abuse requires the prohibition of use, is like the physician who thinks he must kill his patient to cure the disease. If abuse will warrant the destruction of the right to drink, so will it warrant the destruction of the right to eat, which becomes sinful when indulged in to excess.

In so far as THE COMMONWEAL supports Mr. McCarthy in his criticism of the indifference of Catholics to a law which exceeds all legitimate governmental powers, it offends quite as much as he against the plainest principles of morality, logic and common sense.

JOHN E. DONNELLY.

THE COUNTRY FAIR

Winchester, Mass.

TO the Editor: I do hope Mr. Patrick McGowan was the only COMMONWEAL reader who failed to appreciate Padraic Colum's delightful article, "The Country Fair," in your issue of July 22, or to whom it did not declare itself for what it was.

Marvelous! Beauty and tranquillity? Why it fairly drips with both, but I fear Mr. McGowan carries such a huge chip on his shoulder, he lost sight of the title of the article. I shall save his letter for many a good laugh. Who but Padraic Colum could have written such a description? I have read and reread it, and shall read it again.

How I wish I could see a country fair in such a setting. I have never been in Ireland and I have no Irish blood in my veins—but here is hoping they will preserve the town of C——— as it is, and that I shall some day see a fair there.

Mr. MacGowan, please read the article again—or better still, have someone read it to you.

CLARE SINGER DAWES.

TURKEY IN THE STRAW

Washington, D. C.

TO the Editor: THE COMMONWEAL'S editorial question in the issue of September 23, "Turkey in the Straw," is most pertinent and well expressed: "Why do members of the federal government so consistently pretend to an optimism that nothing justifies?"

Why would not a statesmanlike survey of world conditions by those to whom we have given executive functions provide a more reasonable basis of optimism than mere appeals to "confidence? It is something stable and heartening to know that those who act for you realize what is wrong with a situation that is causing you great anxiety. There is every external evidence that the men in federal executive offices do know what is wrong at least as well as most of us.

It would be an interesting contribution on the part of THE COMMONWEAL to present a non-partizan analysis of the competency of either of our political parties to meet the recognizable problems that weigh so heavily on us. THE COMMONWEAL has no business to be partizan and has avoided partizan pitfalls better than most. It takes real ability to avoid bias and remain vigorous; to be impartial and not to become insipid.

THE COMMONWEAL has the ability and the assured position to prepare a survey of the situation in advance of the noise of the next presidential campaign. Its editors need not fear the rôle of the prophet. Prophecy does not enter into it. It is a survey of cold facts and of their reason for being facts that people want—not cheery optimism, nor despair, nor, least of all, prophecy, when no man can see ahead very far.

WILLIAM FRANKLIN SANDS.

LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

Somerville, Mass.

TO the Editor: It is gratifying to note the extremely able manner in which the editorials of your valued periodical deal with questions of public interest, and I sincerely trust they are appreciated to the extent of being used as a criterion for a basis of fact on whatever subject your writers are disposed to give consideration and thought.

Your magazine has been the means of more closely uniting the opinions of our people in public life, who have, through views of prejudice or lack of interpretive understanding, been disposed to think unkindly of matters that fundamentally obtain of a Catholic origin or inference, so it has broadened the vision and created a better understanding between people of every Christian denomination, to the end that in reality Our Lord's teaching is exemplified by a love of neighbor in practice.

The differences of opinion that occur are, of course, logical and follow a natural direction, in order to obtain expression of view that will best illustrate the real facts pertaining to any subject; but your noted writers have been able to treat all questions of public interest in such a manner that it is possible to avoid personalities and minimize prejudices, and to the end that a better understanding is created and a unity of thought promoted or agreed upon at least.

I sincerely trust that your valued periodical will continue to express its views on questions of current and national interest and of a nature to influence the opinions of our public-spirited and distinguished men and women, that forces opposed to constituted authority or government may be discouraged or eliminated, to permit the perpetuation of our American ideals and the fundamental principles of our constitutional government.

WILLIAM H. BASTION.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

Dwindling Populations

The Case against Birth Control, by Edward Roberts Moore; introduction by Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop of New York. New York: The Century Co. $2.50.

THIS is by far the best book on birth control that has appeared in English. It is more scientific and vastly more accurate than any work produced by the advocates of birth control and it is more thorough and more fundamental than the hitherto existing productions on the other side of the question. It discusses the subject under four aspects: namely, medical, population, social and moral and public policy. In the chapter on the social aspects we find a convincing refutation of the assertion that artificial family limitation provides a better *quality* of children. In the two chapters on the moral aspect we find brief but effective presentations of the ethical arguments against birth control, drawn respectively from its disastrous consequences and from its intrinsic immorality.

Probably the most useful and, in a sense, most original part of the volume is that entitled "The Population Aspect." Here it is proved that, far from being in danger of overpopulation, the most enlightened and progressive nations are confronted with the practical certainty of a declining population in the relatively near future. The following propositions are irrefutably established: "Every country in Europe that is not predominantly Slavic in origin or present racial composition is today actually showing a deficit in reproduction, and precisely the same thing is happening in the United States" (page 111). "In all northern and western European countries and in the United States, the women of child-bearing age are not reproducing themselves" (p. 119). Statisticians are agreed that an average of approximately 330 children must be born to every 100 fathers and mothers in order to keep the population about stationary; but the actual average in the United States is probably not more than 220. Unless the birth rate increases considerably our maximum population will be reached about the year 1944 or 1945, to be followed by probably two decades of stationary population and then a decline. The maximum population is put in these circumstances at about 140,000,000.

How do the advocates of birth control meet the foregoing statement of the population trend? The more emotional of them, who are likewise the more ignorant, seem to be unaware of what is happening. Those who do know that the present generation is not reproducing itself profess not to be disturbed over the prospect of a stationary population, but pretend to hope that an actual decline can somehow be prevented. This is the position taken by Professor Henry Pratt Fairchild in a recent number of the *Survey*. Just how parents are to be induced to have an average of three and three-tenths children per couple after the population has become stationary, when they could not be persuaded to do so before that stage was reached, is a question which the professor does not attempt to answer.

Chapter Twelve shows that the world is capable of providing food for many times its present population, and that a similar statement is substantially true of the other elementary requisites of living. Probably the most arresting chapter is that entitled "The Contraception of Consumers and of Prosperity." Most readers of this review are probably acquainted with the main economic argument for birth control. If the wage-earning classes would only make their proportion of the population smaller, their scarcity would enable them to command higher wages. Against this proposition, the chapter just mentioned contends that up to the present, American prosperity has depended upon a steady increase of the population, and that the continuation of prosperity requires "the constant expansion of the consuming market." One of the greatest living authorities on population, Dr. Robert R. Kuczynski, is quoted as follows: "I even venture to say that if one set out to increase unemployment in this country for the next fifteen years he could not find a more efficient means than birth restriction on a very large scale."

So far as land values and the building industry are concerned, the case is very clear. When population ceases to increase or when the rate of increase slackens, there necessarily follows a decrease in the demand for land and buildings. Except in a few of our larger cities the real estate business is bound to undergo a severe decline in the immediate future and the building industry will suffer a corresponding recession. For the same reasons farm land and farm products will continue to experience low and unprofitable prices. In the words of Dr. O. E. Baker of the United States Department of Agriculture: "A stationary population would have serious consequences for the American farmer whose production has increased probably 50 percent in the last ten years. . . . A decrease in population would be a calamity, if present conditions of production persisted and larger markets were not found."

Conceding then that the decline in the birth rate and the apparently inevitable decline in population will be bad for the real estate business, the building trades, the farmers and the owners of all kinds of land, does it follow that all other classes in the community will be injured in the same degree or in any degree? The facts presented in this volume do not provide material for a confident answer either in the negative or in the affirmative. It is quite conceivable that a smaller number of consumers might demand as much as or more goods than does the present number of consumers. "Fewer baby carriages but more wheel-chairs" would be typical of the change in the direction of demand. Less elementary necessaries but more comforts and luxuries. Fewer farmers would be needed and fewer builders, but the hours of labor might conceivably be reduced sufficiently to enable all persons to find employment. The fact that a larger proportion of the population would be old and unproductive need not alarm us so much, so long as our resources and equipment enable us to produce too much of everything. These and several other questions need specific investigation and discussion before the argument set forth in this chapter can be regarded as conclusive.

The chapters on "The Medical Aspect" are probably more discriminating and comprehensive than any other statement that has been made in this field, whether by advocates or opponents. At the beginning of one of these chapters we find the following sentences from the pen of Frederick J. McCann, a distinguished English physician: "All known methods of contraception are harmful to the female; they only differ in being more or less so." The chief evil effects are sterility, cancer, injury to the nervous system and mental disorders. On the whole, the evidence cited from medical men is sufficiently varied and impressive to indicate that the evil effects of the practice upon physical and mental health constitute a real and serious threat to anyone, particularly any woman, who enters upon that perverse way.

The last section of the book presents a brief discussion of the civil laws against the diffusion of birth control information and the genuine interest of the state in discouraging the spread of this kind of "intelligence." This part is followed by some thirty-six pages of appendices, a moderately sized bibliography and a satisfactory index.

JOHN A. RYAN.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Honor to the Peasant

Plato's Britannia, by Douglas Woodruff. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. $2.50.

IN THIS delightful book Douglas Woodruff takes a definite place in that small number of Catholic intellectuals who seem to be practically the only persons in England able to look beneath the present crisis and perceive its philosophic cause. Whether it be the honest conservatism of Baldwin, the opportunism of Lloyd George, the Socialistic liberalism of MacDonald, the more extreme Socialism of the Laborites, or the revolutionary ideas of the Communists, one and all of these forces strive to explain the crisis with materialistic dialectic and to resolve it with materialistic weapons. It apparently never even occurs to them that the real trouble lies in the individual himself, in the falsity of his ideals and his desires.

One and all worship, though some of them would deny it, at the altar of things. One and all of them have forgotten that man can attain contentment only through the cultivation of the spirit and the renunciation of all possessions and aims which might stifle the free flowering of that spirit. All alike think basically of human good in terms of clothes, food and materialistic pleasures. The leaders like their followers, from plutocrats to paupers, seem united in the belief that the good lies in the multiplicity of things. It is an appalling fact that in all the panaceas for the present so-called "depression" offered by political and economic leaders in speeches or in the press, there is never a suggestion that what is wrong with the world lies ultimately neither in tariffs, nor war-debts, nor doles, but in the false values believed in by the individual, believed in so intensely that they have become worship. Call it prosperity, or the greater good for the greater number, or class consciousness, or anything you please, men are worshiping at an altar—for men, even though they be Bolsheviks, will have altars—and on that altar is the golden calf.

The chief protagonist of Mr. Woodruff's book is Socrates, who has made a tour of England and has returned to Athens. The form of the book is of course that of the Socratic Dialogue, and despite some portions which are too local for non-British interest, it is a masterly piece of ironic criticism of both England of today and industrial civilization everywhere. Especially telling are the sections dealing with the Puritan influence through which virtues and vices were herded into their respective categories of acts which make for the accumulation of wealth and those which interfere with it, with the result that the good life has come to increase in goodness in direct ratio to the amount of goods sold! Says Mr. Woodruff-Socrates: "The chief truth about the English is that they must learn to change thier ideas and cease to make their plans on the assumption that they are always to be in the very forefront among the industrial nations of the world." This position he holds is doomed, as it will be doomed everywhere when the world returns, as it must, to a more simple way of living. And then he gives what is the crux of his position—the fact that the agricultural life is the only possible way out of the industrial maze. In this he shows himself to be a true follower of Chesterton, even though he does not in so many words make a plea for Distributism.

"As I understand their predicament, Socrates," said Agropatus, "the English need to sound the retreat from industrialism."

"Yes," I said, "and their governors ought to take a part in making them understand this; and asking what are the permanent foundations of a healthy national life. They ought to ask themselves what is the good life, and then how it will be secured, and they will soon discover that even though there are forty millions of the English in their little island, that island is a most fertile and well-watered place and can give them nearly everything that they really need, with the single exception of wine; so they grieve themselves needlessly by these ceaseless questions as to whether foreigners will be pleased to buy or not."

It is extraordinary that despite the patent fact that the only countries which have so far weathered successfully the present crisis are those in which peasant proprietors are the controlling factor, this solution has scarcely been mentioned. To want less things instead of more is for the industrialist the sin of sins. But as time goes on, we shall hear more of it if civilization as we know it is not to perish. And among many other good and true things which Mr. Woodruff has dared to say in his book, this is the most important.

GRENVILLE VERNON.

Voting for Improvement

Social Politics and Modern Democracies, by Charles W. Pipkin. New York: The Macmillan Company. Two volumes. $7.50.

A STUDY such as the title of this book suggests would require many times two volumes and the research of a lifetime. Professor Pipkin, however, has chosen England and France for his survey of social politics. He has made an exhaustive study of parliamentary debates, together with proposed and enacted legislation of the past fifty years in the two countries. Even to the interested student the work becomes at times a dreary citation of debates and statutes. The parts quoted from various enactments fail quite often to give the essence of the law. As a result, one becomes annoyed by the thought that the author has information which for some good reason of his own he wishes his readers to guess at. The work is lacking in critical analysis. While there is plenty of contrast and comparison between England and France, there is too little evaluation of the results of social legislation within each of these countries. Consequently the reader feels that he is getting a carefully prepared chronological statement of social and industrial enactments. The material presented should nevertheless be of considerable value to legislators and public administrators.

The work reveals an interesting story of the development of the social point of view in the industrial age. The inevitability of gradualness" is shown particularly in the case of England where we get the picture of a fairly even development of state action in the industrial field. Not without a struggle are the forces of individualism driven back, but with the exception of one or two instances they accept defeat.

Many interesting things come to mind in turning over the pages of these volumes, but two things in particular should be mentioned: the first is a sense of the backwardness of America in the field of social legislation when compared to either England or France; the second is a realization of the ready responsiveness of the parliamentary system to the desires of large masses of the people. To realize them one does not have to read Professor Pipkin's work. His volumes offer interesting confirmation.

To people who so confidently assert that the French are such outstanding realists, these volumes are recommended in order that they may read therein of the backwardness of the labor movement and of social legislation in France (until the present generation) due to the prominence given for years to the discussion of revolutionary theory.

JEROME G. KERWIN.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gossip

The Mirrors of 1932. Anonymous. New York: Brewer, Warren and Putnam. $2.50.

Washington Merry-go-round. Anonymous. New York: Horace Liveright, Incorporated. $3.00.

IN THE come and go of Washington journalism not a few newspaper correspondents are beset with a sense of repression. To stick to facts, when facts present an inadequate, if not actually misleading, picture becomes irksome. They are like back-stage observers who see the wires pulled and the scenes shifted and are unable, by reason of journalistic limitations, to make known to the public that it is being captivated by an illusion.

At the same time the public clings to the notion that there is something very mysterious about the political side of Washington. It itches to know the President and presidential candidates not as they are pictured in the press despatches, in costume, but as they really are when they are not playing a part—in other words, when they are not striving for effect or talking for publication.

This is the most charitable explanation for the existence of such books as "The Mirrors of 1932" and "Washington Merry-go-round." They are far from being intimate portraits of the men cast by circumstance for conspicuous rôles in the national political drama, because they obviously lack the essential element of intimacy. Neither are they "close-up" pictures of life in the capital. As pure "gossip" they might be justified but they lack the sprightliness, the freshness and the humor without which gossip is very flat and stale indeed.

"The Mirrors of 1932," instead of reflecting politicians as they are, reflects rather the atrabilious state of mind of the author. To him Hoover "is, by turn, fretful and feeble." Smith "got, in the parlance of the gang, 'a swelled head.'" Coolidge "was not the strong, silent figure a sycophantic press pictured him to be." Roosevelt, "were he a Smith or a Baker or a Robinson, would have dropped from sight long ago." Morrow is politically "a misfit." Robinson has "become a political plutocrat." Owen Young "does not permit his itinerant ideals to influence his economic and industrial policies and programs." From such sorry trees, it would seem, is our presidential timber hewn.

"The Merry-go-round" bears the earmarks of much digging about in the capital lumber-room for old scraps of gossip—some is very old—but it is a relief after the leaden cynicism of "The Mirrors." The composite author has been frankly satirical, sometimes sprightly and amusing, and if his barbs do not slay, they oftentimes carry a decided sting. The State Department, Secretary Stimson and the Foreign Service are targets for many of them and these chapters stand out against a background of rather shopworn but harmless patter, that makes up a large part of the book.

It would be a mistake to assume that either of these volumes sets a Washington journalistic standard. There are some correspondents, like the late Edwin Hood of the Association Press, who knew many public officials intimately enough to write of them as they are, but they are reluctant to overstep the limits of reticence that such a degree of intimacy imposes. In the light of these "revelations" it can be understood why most officials are inclined to hold newspaper men at arm's length. But the obvious shortcoming of the books is not that they disclose too much, but rather that the writers have actually so little to disclose.

ELMER MURPHY.

This is Altman's

New Derby Hat

$5

It is light weight and conforming. It offers various smart proportions for individual preferences—brims wide or narrow—crowns high or medium. It is an essentially smart hat in every respect. And its price is only $5.

Other Derbies up to . . $10

MEN'S HATS — FIRST FLOOR

B. ALTMAN & CO.

FIFTH AVE. at 34th ST., NEW YORK

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEXT WEEK

TOO MANY BREADLINES, by Louis Adamic, brings to light some rather startling things which will equally interest those who may be wondering how one gets into the breadlines, and those who are earnestly solicited to contribute money, if not bread, for the support of them. How in times of distress the breadline business flourishes, often to the prejudice of more necessary charities, is revealed by Mr. Adamic with figures and specific instances. . . . BERLIN IS LIKE THIS, by Louis Golding, is a vivid picture of a city of people gripped by tense, explosive emotions. The very streets seem to vibrate with the boredom and sullen fury of the masses treading them and unseen within doors around them. The enigma of Berlin, and in extension of the German people, is revealed not in political or economic terms, but in terms of human feelings. . . . OUR BETTERS, by Douglas Bush, very amusingly recounts the impressions of a scholar before the expansive generalization and assumptions of popular authors and lecturers on subjects to which they bring little more than their enthusiasms. . . . CANADA AND LITERATURE, by W. McRae Fawcett, goes into the matter of the newly imposed tariff in Canada on foreign periodicals and the hope that thereby Canadians will be impelled, and encouraged by local support, to create their own distinctive literature. . . . Besides these solids of the fare for next week, there are trimmings, none the less important, verse, and briefer articles of a lighter nature, comment on the current drama, and reviews of recent and interesting books, not to speak of the editorials. In the manner of the old custom, we wish you a good appetite.

Hymns and Hurrahs

Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, by William Warren Sweet. New York: Henry Holt and Company. $5.00.

Since Mrs. Eddy, by Altman H. Swihart. New York: Henry Holt and Company. $3.00.

RELIGION has not always been tied to its moorings, here in the United States. It has torn loose from necessary buttresses, has romped and gamboled erratically, but as a consequence is now so much of the essence of American life that we must understand it in order to know ourselves. On the one hand, the truth of Revelation is inviolable, a form of religious teaching is either right or erroneous. But on the other hand, men are what they have believed in; and the present spiritual problem is how to accept this reality as a possible fundament for advances. Here the two books named above appear with helpful evidence. The volume of documents compiled by Professor Sweet has to do with one of the most popular of the evangelical creeds. Mr. Swihart's treatment of what to most of us will seem a curious manifesto of willingness to believe throws light on the religious chaos of today. Is one thinkable without the other? That is an important question, which the reader may decide.

The Baptists were religious emotionalists, whose numbers have greatly increased during the colonial era, despite the contempt in which they were held by more conservative elements of the population and the persecutions which they suffered. During the revolutionary era, however, the mere fact that they were "common people" identified them with the patriot cause and made them advocates of religious liberty. Their share in passing Jefferson's bill for establishing religious freedom has often been commented upon. Later on they virtually swept the frontier—Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois—preaching the naked Bible, building little churches handily beside streams, and now and then branching out into ethical movements such as anti-slavery agitation. The documents collected by Professor Sweet are fascinating, not merely for the insight into Baptist spirituality which they afford but also for the valuable data they provide concerning life on the frontier.

Mr. Swihart's narrative has to do with as extraordinary a record as the confused history of American religion provides. Enter first of all Mrs. Augusta E. Stetson, who began by trying to support her invalid husband by lectures and readings, then became a prominent exponent of Mrs. Eddy's doctrine, and eventually engineered a Christian Science schism. Among her chief tenets was the statement that "the entire Roman Catholic system . . . is built upon the premise of death," and that, though all the laws and statutes of America are divinely inspired, the Monroe Doctrine is especially august since it protects the United States against the Latin Catholic countries. Enter then Mrs. Anne C. Bill, who carried the Eddy beacon to England and thereupon laid claim to the wealth of the Christian Science churches in America—and substituted for the Monroe doctrine an ideal of Anglo-American-Jewish friendship.

It is a curious and valuable document anent religious psychology which Mr. Swihart offers. In his introduction he says: "As the Catholic Church did not prove to be sufficiently catholic to include all who called themselves Christians, so the Mother Church has not desired, nor been able, to include within its fold all who claim to be Christian Scientists." That seems to me a rather startling commentary on the Reformers.

PAUL CROWLEY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poets

Kinds of Love, by Max Eastman. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.50.

Wind in the Grass, by Christy MacKaye. New York: Harper and Brothers. $2.00.

THAT Mr. Eastman's collected poems will interest those concerned with liberal thought is more likely than that they will interest the critical reader. It is difficult to call to mind a book less even, more careless and inept, than this one. Its images are often singularly forced, more often surprisingly trite, even at times vulgar and ridiculous, as in lines like

> "When like a trout—or half a trout—all gleaming,
> Elaine dived up in laughter dripping pearls."

But it would be untrue to suggest that such grotesque abuses of the image are all that one finds here. There are also shorter pieces, simple and direct statements that have greater validity than that of the curiously involved, tortuous, blunderingly conceived long poem. One wishes these alone had been collected.

Like most first books, Miss MacKaye's is a curious melange. It reflects what is known as a "pagan spirit," but not in the sense in which it is the fashion to speak of Mr. Eastman, as a champion of "the new morality," as "pagan." Miss MacKaye's paganism is the child's paganism: her relation to nature is that of an elf. Often a childlike quality of imagination in these poems brings to mind the work of Hilda Conkling, yet Miss MacKaye's are more often the less pure and immediate perceptions of nature of the two. Again, one is reminded, by some simple, felicitous statement, of Emily Dickinson. It is to Miss MacKaye's credit that these influences are suggested rather than made patent as one reads. But all in all, this would hardly be a distinguished or a heartening book were it not for a certain tenuous thread of mysticism discoverable in some of these poems. It is upon the strengthening of this quality that Miss McKaye's increase as a poet will probably depend.

RAYMOND ELLSWORTH LARSSON.

Sigrid Undset's New Novel

The Wild Orchid, by Sigrid Undset. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $2.50.

THE GREAT Norwegian novelist's latest book (set in modern Norway) is merely half of a projected study in contrast between earthly and heavenly love. We get here the impressionable young manhood of Paul Selmer, whose parents are progressive, free-thinking and divorced. Paul's passionate love affair with a girl of the people, and his sudden, overwhelming attraction to Catholicism, give dramatic intensity to the first part of the book. The lull that supervenes upon these ardent experiences when his sweetheart leaves him and he lapses into a defensive cynicism, occupies the closing chapters. This period in Paul's development must have a significant place in the completed pattern of his life, when that is put before us, but that its effect here is anticlimactic, is undeniable.

This is enhanced by the penetration and richness of the first chapters. The book lacks, of course, the splendor and spaciousness inherent in the author's earlier material; the romance of full physical life and the romance of holiness, which colored mediaeval society at its harshest, have no counterpart in the brightly sanative, positivist atmosphere in which Julie Selmer brings up her sons. But this, soberer, less glamorous chronicle confirms one's sense of the novelist's truly extraordinary powers. There is the same encompassing, inexhaustible knowledge of

Read what Carlton J. H. Hayes says about "integral nationalism" in his latest book,

The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism

America in its review of Dr. Hayes's book says, "the Faith has no deadlier foe than 'integral nationalism.'"

"The book represents the critical views of a Catholic historical philosopher applied to the rise of nationalism, which has been so closely associated with the Protestant revolt from Rome." *New York World Telegram.*

$3.50

Order from your Bookseller or from the Publisher

RAY LONG AND RICHARD R. SMITH, INC.
12 East 41st Street New York

"The best work of Catholic fiction offered for our delectation during the current season." *Second Printing*

SILVER TRUMPETS CALLING

By LUCILLE BORDEN

"While the novel deals chiefly with the efforts of four young people who have consecrated themselves to the daring work of saving little children to the Faith, the story shifts from Russia to Paris and Rome and vividly portrays the heroic loyalty of the emigrés to their religion. Beautifully written, authentic, a superb and deeply moving account of the passion of the Catholic Church in Russia."—*America.*

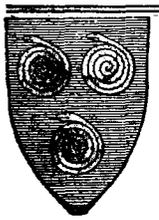
A Catholic Book Club Selection

$2.50 *from your bookstore or*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
60 Fifth Avenue New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOOD COUNSEL COLLEGE, WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.
A CATHOLIC COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
Registered by the University of the State of New York with power to confer degrees
PEDAGOGICAL COURSE. BEAUTIFUL LOCATION.
Forty Minutes from New York Resident and Non-Resident Students
Catalogues on application to the Secretary

St. Hilda Guild, Inc.

CHURCH VESTMENTS, ALTAR LINEN
Ecclesiastical Embroidery
Conferences with reference to the adornment of churches
Old Embroidery Transferred
131 EAST 47th STREET NEW YORK
EL dorado 5-1058

PIUS X SCHOOL OF LITURGICAL MUSIC
COLLEGE OF THE SACRED HEART
133rd Street and Convent Avenue
New York
Autumn and Winter Session
Four Years' Course for Music Students—Two Years' Course in School Music and Gregorian Chant for Music Students, Teachers and Supervisors.
Gregorian Chant — Gregorian Accompaniment — Liturgical Singing — Boy Choir — Justine Ward Method — Harmony — Theory — Counterpoint — Courses and Private Lessons in the above subjects.
For further information, address the Secretary—BRadhurst 2-8000

ORATE FRATRES
A Review Devoted to the Liturgical Apostolate

For nearly four years *Orate Fratres* has been working for the cause of the Liturgical Apostolate, a movement which is active in every part of the world and aims to foster a more diligent and intelligent participation in the Church's solemn liturgy.

Founded and edited by the Benedictine monks of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota.

"The Holy Father is greatly pleased . . . that there is emanating from this abbey an inspiration that tends to elevate the piety of the faithful by leading it back to the pure fountain of the sacred liturgy."—Cardinal Gasparri, November 21, 1929.

Published every four weeks, beginning with Advent. 48 pp. $2.00 per year.

Write for free sample copy and descriptive leaflet which tells of the need and aims of the Liturgical Apostolate.

THE LITURGICAL PRESS
COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA

each separate soul, the same simple method of gradual revelation: the method, one might call it, of unconscious infallibility.

This gallery of people lacking all relation to an organically religious society, must be studied in themselves; and yet place must be found within the unity of the story for Paul's religious awakening. This is finely and fully achieved. We see why his relations with them led him beyond them: yet we do justice to them all. To Lucy, an artless Lillith who tempts Paul into an illicit relation, not from depravity but from an unformed, undisciplined generosity infinitely more tragic and touching; to Erik, Paul's uprooted and bewildered father, chivalrously upholding his divorced wife; to his second wife, touched with commonness, but deeply kind; above all, to his mother Julie, efficient, conscientious, widely generous, seriously devoted to her conception of liberty. It is most of all this sufficiency of his mother's type, of course, which defines Paul's discontent with the emancipated life. But when, under his decomposing gaze, Julie's optimism shows to us as childishly immature, and her radicalism suddenly becomes a mere neat, manageable accessory to her own career, it is not that propagandist standards are invoked to judge her. Julie fails, for all her genuine fineness, by the deepest human tests. This is her son's point of departure toward the realm of revealed religion.

Such is Paul's preparation for the Faith. He has, on the positive side, only the most superficial knowledge of it, though that is backed by a deep intuition. But his own world has prepared him. He knows its superior types; they are inadequate. His training in moral and conventional freedom has permitted him a love affair without assuring its stability, or obviating his feeling of secret, solitary shame. Finally, his "rational" resistance to the pull of the Church, as to a blind, merely emotional attraction, is gradually presenting itself to him as a deliberate opposition to grace. The specifically Catholic half of Paul's story will make powerful reading.

MARY KOLARS.

Spanish Setting

Caballeros, by Ruth Laughlin Barker. New York: D. Appleton and Company. $3.00.

THROUGH Mary Austin and many another devotee of the charms of New Mexico we have recently learned much of the customs and the arts of the Southwest Indians; in fact the mystery and glamor of strictly Indian ritual and art have tended to obscure the Spanish heritage in most of the writing of late years. Mrs. Barker's book admirably illumines the Spanish background, adding to our already copious literature regarding the Indian, condensed information about the other two racial components of the pre-American scene: the Spaniard, and the Spanish-American (or Mexican).

The author has for years been a resident of Santa Fé, and she has collected all sorts of interesting notes about the crafts and arts, the religious and social customs, of her neighbors. It is true that her outlook is decidedly romantic, and that some of her observations are pedantic, resulting in some florid writing after the fashion of travel folders, and some rather painfully encyclopaedic. On the other hand, she has studied closely and usually dispassionately the Mexican way of life; and in the same even tenor she can describe the last public crucifixion of the *penitentes,* correct recipes for Mexican dishes, and the sweet traditions that went into the making of *santos* and *bultos*. The volume can be enthusiastically recommended to those who would like to adorn their appreciation of the Southwest with a knowledge of the Spanish-American side of its culture.

HARRY MCGUIRE.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philosophical Physics

Science and First Principles, by F. S. C. Northrop. New York: The Macmillan Company. $3.00.

THE RAPID advances of physics during the last twenty-five years not only have brought practical applications, but have also been most important on the theoretical side. This deeper insight, which can be brought under the headings "theory of relativity" and "quantum theory," has necessitated a critical reëxamination of concepts and methods which heretofore had been taken to be self-evident, with the purpose of restriction and more precise distinction. That has reawakened the philosophical interest among physicists.

The present book is written with the purpose of giving an examination of the philosophical difficulties, not only of the physicist, but also of the biologist and partly of the psychologist, and to bring a solution.

I anticipated reviewing it with great interest, because I had read, some time before, a very interesting article by the author (who is associate professor of philosophy at Yale) in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, in which he compares some recent speculations of Eddington and others with Platonism.

Nor was I disappointed in the first third of the book, in which the author gives a very interesting account of Greek natural philosophy and the connection of its main theories with the different sciences—the atomic theory with general observation of inorganic nature, Platonism with astronomy, Aristotelianism with biology. The discussion is carried on through the middle ages to modern times, with a fairly correct account of the two theoretical fields mentioned above, although some mistakes occur. The author has apparently read extensively; also later on he gives detailed descriptions of characteristic biological phenomena like the regulatory properties of the blood in respiration, heredity, experimental modification of the development of embryos. His logical rigor and his ability in pointing out philosophical questions which need consideration show up strongly in this first part.

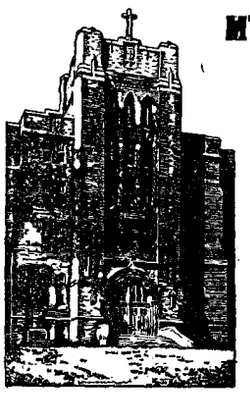
When, however, the author tries to give a solution for the difficulties, these advantages of the book unfortunately disappear. He assumes the whole world to be surrounded by a hollow shell of perfect symmetrical form, of simple nature and unchanging properties. This he calls the macroscopic atom. He uses it to answer most of the questions in physics, biology and the nature of man, but his arguments are so vague, his reasoning so loose, that it seems to me one could prove almost anything one wanted with such a method.

The physicist in particular has no use for any theory that does not, besides explaining the known results of observation quantitatively, allow the prediction of new experimental results precisely. This the new theory does not do. Besides, the author tries to explain some facts which can be easily explained with present theories, while the real remaining difficulties are glossed over.

The psychological part contains a proof of the existence of consciousness as something not physical, which was interesting to me. But the psychical is ascribed as a fundamental property to all of nature, existing in the atoms besides the physical and the formal, especially in the "macroscopic atom," which is compared with the Aristotelian "unmoved mover" and declared to be the source of all order in nature and to have the properties of what the Greeks called the divine.

On the whole, an example of what may happen when philosophers make physical theories.

KARL F. HERZFELD.



MT. ST. MARY-ON-THE-HUDSON
NEWBURGH, N. Y.

The school that emphasizes character and health in a truly Catholic atmosphere.

Definite preparation for a career in college, business, art, music. Scholastic standards accredited by the University of the State of New York.

Modern fireproof buildings. Sixty-five-acre campus. High altitude.

New gymnasium; athletic field.

Illustrated booklet upon request.
Sisters of St. Dominic

Madonna House Benefit Shop

Proceeds for the poor of the Lower East Side
QUEENSBORO BRIDGE MARKET
59th Street and First Avenue
Telephone VO lunteer 5-3123

We Need
Furniture
House Furnishings
Clothing

A truck will call for anything you do not want.
Help the victims of the unemployment situation!

MADONNA HOUSE
169-175 Cherry Street New York City

Telephone Oakland 2208

Miss Sara Benedicta O'Neill

BOOKDEALER
for the
CHICAGO CALVERT CLUB

At home Tuesdays, afternoon and evenings.
Other times by appointment. Tea.

Books useful and interesting to Catholics
4530 Drexel Blvd.
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The Ursuline Academy

A College Preparatory School for Girls

RESIDENT AND DAY PUPILS

Registered by the
Regents of the State of New York

Grand Concourse at 165th Street
New York, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BETHANY HOUSE
(Conducted for Women by the Maryknoll Sisters)
DELIGHTFULLY SITUATED AMONG THE WESTCHESTER HILLS
Spacious Grounds—Modern Structure—Excellent Table and Service
Comfort and Refinement—Chapel—Daily Mass
REASONABLE RATES
Dir. Directress, BETHANY HOUSE, Ossining, Maryknoll, P.O., N. Y.
Tel. No. Ossining 1452

MOUNT DE SALES ACADEMY
CATONSVILLE, MARYLAND
Conducted by the Sisters of the Visitation
High School—Resident and Day Pupils
Affiliated with the Catholic University of America
Day School—Grades IV to VIII
Write to the Directress for further information

MANUSCRIPTS TYPED
Manuscripts neatly and accurately typed
50¢ per 1,000 words
Free carbon copy
BEATRICE BROWN
2405 West 4th Street JOPLIN,MO.

IRISH HAMS AND BACON
Wiltshire Hams and Bacon
German Frankfurters
Westphalian Hams
M. H. GREENEBAUM, Inc.
220 GREENWICH STREET NEW YORK

DAUBER & PINE BOOKSHOPS, Inc.
66 Fifth Avenue at 12th Street
Largest and Choicest Stock of Good Second-hand and Out-of-Print Books on all Subjects.
Rare, Old and Curious Books.
Fine Sets, Choice Bindings, First Editions.
Americana and Autographs.
Reasonable Prices. Catalog free.
Open until 10 p. m.

BURR PRINTING HOUSE
FOUNDED 1837
FRANKFORT AND JACOB STREETS
NEW YORK, N. Y.
CATALOGUES, MAGAZINES, BOOKS
AND COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Briefer Mention

Better Left Unsaid, by Daisy, Princess of Pless. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Incorporated. $5.00.

THESE personal memoirs of an English noblewoman who became a German princess are more personal in tone than her earlier books. As a result they would doubtless have made an admirable serial for the *Lady's Fireside Friend,* so filled are they to the brim with that gibble-gabble which delights feminine hearts. This princess is no vapid creature. She has always possessed a gift for thoroughly appreciating the texture of an event or scene, and she is wise enough not to conceal her own vanity. Indeed, the book faithfully chronicles every compliment paid its author, thus emphasizing once again the salutary truth no man dare forget—that his lady fair may not run up a bill for groceries but simply must have a constant diet of flattery. The princess found Germany and her husband too serious: she cried herself to sleep on her sixteenth anniversary thinking of the "might have beens." But in the end one wonders if the world was not extremely kind to such—well, such another woman.

English Biography in the Eighteenth Century, by Mark Longaker. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. $5.00.

THOUGH Professor Longaker's volume is relatively dissertational, it is as interesting a product of research in English literary history as we have come by in some time. During the eighteenth century, biography emerged as a distinct form of English prose and was almost immediately exemplified in really great books. Our author shows, by comparison with what had preceded, how sudden a development it was. A good summary chapter on "influences which made possible the modern conception of biography" is followed by a coördinated review which traces the story from the rogue books to Boswell. This last-named estimable gentleman is carefully studied and then accepted as the standard at which true life-writing must aim. There is very much interesting material here, indeed, and we are gratified to note that Dr. Longaker writes quite considerably better than do most research workers.

CONTRIBUTORS

BARBARA BARCLAY CARTER is an English journalist at present residing in the United States.

GEORGE K. MCCABE is a member of the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh.

BERTRAND K. HART is literary editor of the Providence *Journal.*

RICHARD BURTON, poet, lecturer, former head of the English department of the University of Minnesota, is the author of several books of which the latest is "Why Do You Talk Like That?"

ROBERT SPARKS WALKER, formerly editor of the *Southern Fruit Grower,* is a journalist and lecturer and the author of "Anchor Poems."

MARGARET M. WILLIAMSEN is a new contributor to THE COMMONWEAL.

JAMES LARKIN PEARSON is a North Carolina poet.

REV. JOHN A. RYAN is professor of moral theology and industrial ethics in the Catholic University of America, and director of the social action department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. He is the author of "A Living Wage" and "Social Reconstruction."

GRENVILLE VERNON is the author of "The Image in the Path."

JEROME G. KERWIN is a member of the department of political science and public law at the University of Chicago.

ELMER MURPHY is one of the editors of the *Nation's Business.*

PAUL CROWLEY is a translator and writer of literary comment.

RAYMOND ELLSWORTH LARSSON, poet and critic, is the author of "O City, Cities!"

HARRY MCGUIRE is editor of *Outdoor Life.*

DR. KARL F. HERZFELD is one of the directors of the physical laboratory of the Johns Hopkins University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED